


# THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SISTER NIVEDITA



Sister Nivedita, known as Margaret Elizabeth Noble, was a great disciple of Swami Vivekananda. The Swami has dedicated her to the service of India and hence called her 'Nivedita'.

Sister Nivedita's was a fiery spirit that knew no rest till her whole personality was spent for the cause of her dedication—India. In the midst of her tireless efforts for the amelioration of Indian women, she found time to make a deep study of Indian literature, philosophy, mythology and history. Combined with her comprehensive mind was a remarkable largeness of heart and deep insight of love. This helped her to interpret in an extraordinary manner Indian religion and thought, art and literature, custom and tradition.



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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF  
SISTER NIVEDITA  
VOL. III



# THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SISTER NIVEDITA

VOLUME 3



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**Advaita Ashrama**

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The first section of the Third Volume of the present edition of the Complete Works of Sister Nivedita includes her articles on Indian Art, reviews of books on Art and appreciations of a series of Indian and European paintings.

The rebirth of Indian Art was one of Nivedita's dearest dreams. She believed that "art offers us the opportunity of a great common speech, and its rebirth is essential to the upbuilding of the motherland—its re-awakening rather." (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 3). Hence her profound thoughts on Art in general and Indian Art in particular are of great importance.

She is one of the foremost of art connoisseurs who inspired and encouraged our young artists to revive ancient Indian art and to develop modern Indian art. She told them: "Art is charged with a spiritual message,—in India today, the message of Nationality. But if this message is actually to be uttered, the profession of the painter must come to be regarded, not simply as a means of earning livelihood, but as one of the supreme ends of the highest kind of education." (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 12).

At the end of the section are added some notes on notable European paintings because they were chiefly written to demonstrate the true ideals of Western art to the Indian artists.

The interesting article titled 'The Star Pictures' was published in three instalments in *The Modern Review* in 1911 and 1912. These were later included in the book *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* by Ananda Coomaraswamy. It includes myths embedded in the Puranas. Nivedita held the view that the Indian mind interested in astronomy spiritualized most of the mythological characters and they became the heroes of the sky. Here she selects those stories that represent the spiritualising interpretation of the stars.

*Buddha and Yashodhara* was first published in *The Modern Review* in 1919. Together with 'Shiva or Mahadeva' it was published in book form by the Udbodhan Office in 1919 with the title *Siva & Buddha*.

After these writings are published the following three works :

Cradle Tales of Hinduism  
Religion and Dharma  
Aggressive Hinduism

The *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* includes stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. In the manner of the old-time story-teller Nivedita has presented here the never-dying tales with the charm of freshness, literary grace and beauty, as also the thrill and fascination of the narrative.

The book was first published in 1907. But she had started collecting the material for the stories for the American children in 1899. To Miss MacLeod she wrote on November 16, 1899 :

"I mean to tell the little ones about the Christ-child, and then on to the Indian Christ-child, Dhruva, Prahlad, Gopala." She made regular study of this literature by going to the libraries and consulting Swami Vivekananda and Jogin-Ma on this subject. We come to know from her letters that one Mr. Waterman offered to publish these stories for her. On April 20, 1900, she wrote to Mrs. Longfellow :

"I never did anything so difficult as these stories. Fancy! Today I have before me the task of putting on paper what I know about Buddha! It is like trying to put the rainbow under a tumbler. I have only done five stories so far, of which only one, Prithvi Rai, satisfies Mr. W." Ultimately the said publisher did not publish the book. On July 16, 1906, we find her writing to Mrs. Bull :

"The *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* are nearly ready. I hope to send one copy to England by the end of July and one copy to you—to try to publish independently and simultaneously in America. We have decided that if I could for this

book get £ 100 down and a small royalty, say 2 cents or 1 d. a copy, it would be good."

*King Parikshit and the Frog Maiden* was included in the first edition of the *Studies from an Eastern Home*. 'The Story of the Great God: Shiva Or Mahadeva' was originally written in 1899. It was rewritten in 1903 with certain changes and was included in *The Web of Indian Life*, which has been published in Volume II of the *Complete Works*. The original article contained a few introductory pages. These pages only are printed here with the title—'Religion of the Mountains'. The story in its original form was published in *The Modern Review* in 1919, and was published in book form by the Udbodhan Office in the same year.

*Religion and Dharma* was published in 1915 by Longmans, Green, & Co., London. The volume was chiefly compiled from the *Occasional Notes* written in the editorial Column of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and other short notes and articles written for *The Modern Review*. The preface to the book by S. K. Ratcliffe is printed here as an appendix. The book was reprinted in India by the Advaita Ashrama in 1952.

Due to the untimely death of the Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swami Swarupananda, in July 1906, Nivedita was requested to write in the editorial columns captioned the 'Occasional Notes'. A selection from these pieces forms the text of the book. Adequate titles were given by the first editor of the book and these have not been changed in this edition. Two changes have, however, been made. On comparing these pieces with their first publication in the columns of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1906 to 1911, many passages were found to be eliminated. Therefore in this edition the omitted lines have been restored to their original positions.

Secondly, the following pieces, 'The Basis', 'The Task before Us', 'The Ideal' and 'Self-Idealism' have been omitted, because they are the four chapters of the book called *Aggressive Hinduism*. *Aggressive Hinduism* was published in 1905 by G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, and it contained the first three chapters only. The second edition, published by



the Udbodhan Office in 1927, was enlarged by the addition of the fourth piece. This piece is titled 'Self-Idealism' in *Religion and Dharma*, but 'On the Way to the Ideal' in *Aggressive Hinduism*.

In the present edition *Aggressive Hinduism* has been published separately because it has an importance of its own. Swami Vivekananda always talked of making Hinduism aggressive. Nivedita studied the Swami's idealism and was staggered at the vastness of his conception. In this booklet, however, she tried her best to put down her ideas in writing. She wrote it perhaps in March 1905. We quote below from her letter to Miss MacLeod written in December 1906. It shows how and why she wrote it, and how she loved writing it.

"I am so pleased and surprised that you like 'Aggressive Hinduism'. I think I only appropriated twenty copies. I suppose I thought it too technical for general reading. Also—if I remember rightly it was full of proof-errors. But I love to look back on the writing of it. I sat down one evening thinking, 'If this were my last word to the Indian people, let me try to write Swami's whole ideal for them in one message.' I finished it in three evenings, and had copied it out and perhaps sent it off by the Friday that week. Two days later, I was down with brain-fever, and no one knew whether I would live or die! So it *might* really have been my last will and testament."

In conclusion, we thank the Belur Math, the Udbodhan Office, the Advaita Ashrama, the National Library, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, and the 'Desh' Patrika Office for making available to us certain newspapers, periodicals, blocks etc. in their possession.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have helped us in bringing out the volume on the day of her hundredth birth anniversary.

October 28, 1967.

PRAVRAJKA ATMAPRANA



# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

## of the

### WRITINGS OF SISTER NIVEDITA INCLUDED IN THIS VOLUME

Date

- 1903 Introduction to the 'Ideals of the East'—a book written by Kakasu Okakura and published by John Murray, London.
- 1905 First edition of *Aggressive Hinduism* published by G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.
- 1906 August; note on Abanindra Nath Tagore's Bharat Mata' published in the *Prabasi*. Note on 'India the Mother' published in *The Indian World*.  
 September; note on 'The Coronation of Sita and Rama' published in the *Prabasi*.  
 October; note on 'Sainte Geneviève Watching over Paris' published in the *Prabasi*.  
 November; note on 'Millet's Angelus' published in the *Prabasi*.
- 1907 January and February; 'The Function of Art in Shaping Nationality' published in *The Modern Review* in two parts; included in *Civic and National Ideals* in 1911 as 'The Function of Art in Shaping Nationality' and 'The Message of Art.'  
 March; 'Notes on Pictures' published in the *Prabasi*.  
 May; note on 'The Passing of Shah Jahan' published in *The Modern Review*; included in *Civic and National Ideals* in 1911. Note on Guido Reni's 'Beatrice Cenci' published in *The Modern Review*. Note on Richter's 'Queen Louise' published in the *Prabasi*.  
 June; note on Jules Breton's 'Song of the Lark' and 'The Gleaner' under the title 'Peasant Girls' published in the *Prabasi*. First edition of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* published by Longmans, Green & Co., London.

## Date

- October; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'The Death-bed of Dasharatha' published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1908     March; note on Abanindra Nath Tagore's 'Sita' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             April; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Sati' published in *The Modern Review*; included in *Civic and National Ideals* published in 1911.  
             May; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Kaikeyi' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             June; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Vikramaditya and the Vetal' published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1909     July; *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* published in *The Modern Review*.  
             September; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Dance of Shiva' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             October; review of E. B. Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting* published in *The Modern Review*.  
             November; *Havell on Hindu Sculpture* published in *The Modern Review*; included in *Civic and National Ideals* in 1911 under the title *Indian Sculpture*.  
             December; *Havell on Indian Painting* published in *The Modern Review*; included in *Civic and National Ideals* in 1911 and titled *Indian Painting*.
- 1910     January; note on Abanindra Nath Tagore's 'Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj' published in *The Modern Review*; included in *Civic and National Ideals* in 1911.  
             March; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Damayanti's Swayamvara' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             April; *The Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* published in *The Modern Review*.  
             May; note on Nanda Lal Bose's 'Ahalya' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             August; note on Upendra Kishore Roy's 'The Churning of the Ocean' published in *The Modern Review*.  
             October; note on Sukhalata Rao's 'Srimati, Martyr,' published in *The Modern Review*.

## Date

- November; notes on Asit Kumar Haldar's 'Vina' and Nanda Lal Bose's 'Jagai and Madhai' published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1911 August; note on Samarendra Nath Gupta's 'Abhimanyu' published in *The Modern Review*.  
November & December; *Star Pictures* published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1912 January; *Star Pictures* published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1915 First edition of *Religion and Dharma* by Longmans, Green, & Co., London.
- 1916 New Impression of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Longmans, Green, & Co., London.
- 1917 Second Impression of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Longmans, Green, & Co., London.
- 1919 September; *Shiva or Mahadeva* published in *The Modern Review*.  
October; *Buddha and Yashodhara* published in *The Modern Review*.  
First edition of *Siva and Buddha* published by the Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.
- 1926 Third Impression of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Longmans, Green, & Co., London.
- 1927 Second Edition of *Aggressive Hinduism* by Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.
- 1928 Fourth Impression of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Longmans, Green, & Co., London.
- 1950 Third edition of *Aggressive Hinduism* by the Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.
- 1952 First Indian edition of *Religion and Dharma* by Advaita Ashrama.
- 1958 New edition of *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* by Advaita Ashrama.
- 1966 Fourth edition of *Aggressive Hinduism* by the Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.

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# INDIAN ART









Sister Nivedita

# THE FUNCTION OF ART IN SHAPING NATIONALITY

## I

IT is in the endeavour to take spiritual possession of its own, in struggling to carry out the tasks before it, that the national idea is shaping itself in India. Readjustments are necessary in all directions, and in making those very readjustments, it may be, we shall become, we are actually becoming, a nation. For it is not change that is destructive, but *aimless or wrongly-purposed change*. And precisely from such it is that the ideal of nationality, with its overwhelming impulse of moral direction and ethical stability, is to deliver us. Wherever we look, on the sea of struggle, we see this thought, "That we be a nation," shining as their pole-star above the tossing voyagers.

We may turn, for instance, to the culture and position of Indian womanhood. Shall there be new developments here? And in what direction? The immediate need at all costs to save ourselves from the present ever-hastening process of despair and ruin, and the further need to bind ourselves together, in a firm and coherent whole, self-conscious, self-directed, self-controlled, in other words, the will towards nationality, gives us at once an answer to our question and a guide. Change there must be. Shall India alone, in the streaming destinies of the Jagat, refuse to flow on from form to form? But what changes we make shall be made freely, deliberately, of our own will and judgment, deliberately

designed towards an end chosen by ourselves. Shall we, after centuries of an Indian womanhood, fashioned on the pattern of Sita, of Savitri, of Rani Ahalya Bai or of Jahnabi of Tipperah, descend to the creation of coquettes and *divorcees*? Shall the Indian Padmini be succeeded by the Greek Helen? Change it is that there must be, or India goes down in the shipwreck of her past achievements. Change there must be. But new learning shall add to the old gravity and wisdom, without taking from the ancient holiness. Wider responsibilities shall make the pure more pure. Deeper knowledge shall be the source of a new and grander tenderness. This generation may well cherish the hope that they shall yet see the hand of the great mother shaping a womanhood of the future so fair and noble that the candle-light of the ancient dreams shall grow dim in the dawn of that modern realisation.

The Education of Woman is, however, only one of many questions. In Science, in Education as a whole, in commercial and industrial organisation, it is a truism to say that we are now on the road to fresh developments. In the case of social questions, for example, we have long been agitated by disputes as to the desirability or undesirability of certain immediate transformations. But perhaps the actual fact is that we have never yet been fully competent to discuss such matters. We have perhaps had neither the necessary knowledge [and this kind of knowledge, it may be pointed out, is the rarest and most difficult to obtain, in the whole world, or in life], nor the necessary responsibility, nor, above all, the necessary leisure from foreign criticism and advice, all of which we must have, if we are ever to arrive at opinions which are really our own, on these important matters. In fact the growth of a sense of nationality involves, amongst other things, something like the spontaneous appearance of a sovereign faculty amongst us. It is like the perception of their own unity and inter-relation, amongst the different parts of a single organism. Related to each other in the bonds of this idea, we become able to sit in national commission,



as it were, on the problems of our own society and our own future.

And about nothing, perhaps, is this more necessary than with regard to Indian Art. Let us suppose then that the national intellect has placed itself in an attitude to consider and predetermine this question of the past and future of art in India. What is it to find? What is it to decide?

Hinduism, in one of its aspects, is neither more nor less than a great school of symbolism. Every peasant, every humblest bazaar-dweller understands and loves a picture, a pot, a statue, a decorative emblem of any sort. The culture of the eye is perfect in this land, as it is said to be in Italy; and the ancient habit of image-worship has made straight and short and much-travelled the road from eye to heart. The appeal of this symbolism, moreover, is universal. It matters not what be the language spoken, nor whether the reader be literate or illiterate, the picture tells its own story, and tells it unmistakably. The lamp left lighted on the threshold that the housewife, returning from the river before dawn, may know her own door; the bunch of grain made fast with mud to the lintel; the light beneath the Tulsi plant, or the wending of the cows to the village at sundown, these scenes and such as these will carry a single message to every Indian heart alike. Hence art offers us the opportunity of a great common speech, and its rebirth is essential to the up-building of the motherland—its re-awakening rather. For India has known many great art-epochs which cannot yet have died. The age that sculptured Elephanta was deeply impressed with the synthesis of Hinduism. The power that painted Ajanta was as free and living in its enjoyment and delineation of nature as any modern school of realists. The builders and carvers of Sanchi, of Amaravati and Gandhara enjoyed a continuous evolution of art, marked by great periodic waves of enthusiasm, through several successive centuries. Even a Mohammedan Empire, apart from its own architectural undertakings, only changed the form, it never attempted to suppress the process of creative art in India,

as those who have seen the illuminated manuscripts in the Library at Bankipore can bear witness.

An age of nationality, then, must resume into its own hands the power of each and all of these epochs. The key to new conquests lies always in taking up rightly our connection with the past. The man who has no inheritance has no future. The modern student needs to know and understand this. For he has suffered the ordeal of being made suddenly to survey the world as a whole. He is by no means confined, as were his fathers, to the imagination of the things that his own people have done. He is in a position to compare the art of Egypt with that of Greece, that of mediæval Italy or Holland with that of modern France. And if he knows where he himself stands, in relation to it all, this may prove an emancipation. But if he do not know, it is merely like taking away the protecting hedge from the plant that is too young to grow alone.

For India is not, in matters of art, to hark back to old ways, and refuse to consider or adopt anything that is new. But at the same time, the Indian people have been trained in Indian art-conventions and cultured through Indian associations, and it is worse than useless to desire to speak to them through the conventions and associations of Italy or Greece. An Indian painting, if it is to be really Indian and really great, must appeal to the Indian heart in an Indian way, must convey some feeling or idea that is either familiar or immediately comprehensible; and must further, to be of the very highest mark, arouse in the spectator a certain sense of a revelation for which he is the nobler. But to do this, it is clear that it must be made up of elements which in themselves are already approved of by the communal taste. Thus an Indian man who has studied the carved stone doorways of Orissa, or the beaten silver of Southern temples has already possessed himself of a great language of the beautiful, and when he speaks in that language, in India, he will be understood by all, and outside India by those who are sufficiently trained, or sufficiently gifted. Now this language



he will speak to perfection, because he himself will understand every line and curve of it. But will he be as competent to represent, say a Gothic window, as he is to draw an Orissan exterior? Obviously not. In the foreign case, fine artist and learned student as he is on his own ground, he will be liable to perpetrate faults and even vulgarities of style which may altogether spoil his work in the eyes of those brought up in a world of Gothic architecture. At the very best, the foreign imitator will produce only would-be Gothic, just as the English or German Manufacturer can produce only a would-be Indian pattern in his cloth. We see thus that even the elements of which a picture is made up, are like a language, and just as no true poet could willingly choose to write all his poems in a foreign tongue, so no artist can do work which is eternal in its quality, unless his pictures are couched in terms "understood of the people." All great expression, whether by writing or drawing or sculpture or what not, is to some extent the outcry of a human heart for human sympathy, and men do not so cry in an unknown tongue.

But the fact that the elements of our style are peculiar to our own country does not preclude their reaching the heights of the universal appeal. The Orissan doorway could not be produced by a foreigner, but it can be enjoyed by him. The absolutely beautiful is understood by all humanity. None of us could reproduce an ancient Egyptian temple, but all of us must admire one when we see it. It came out of its own order. It expressed that order—and its greater and more general qualities speak to us all. At the same time it must be remembered that in order to make another like it, we should have to feel and live and hope and pray and be, in all respects, like the men who built it. And this fact doubtless prevents our understanding or enjoying it, as was done in its own time. For in spite of all the false theories of sentimentalists, a ruin is *never* so beautiful as the building in use. Nothing endears like the familiarity of daily life.

As an example, however, of the way in which the universal

element in a picture may triumph over that which is local and limited in it, we might take the position which is gradually being assumed in the Hindu pantheon by pictures of the Madonna and Child. One can hardly go down the Chitpore Road without catching sight of one of these. Now it is clear that in this case it is the intimate humanity of the motive, with the bright and simple colour, that appeals to the humble owner. A barrier to his sympathy lies in the foreignness of the subject. He knows the names of the two characters, it is true, but very little more about them. He cannot imagine their daily life together. He knows no stories of *that* Divine Childhood! Yet, it is after all, a mother and her child, and the whole world understands. A thousand incidents of every day are common to these and their like everywhere. So the human in the great work redeems the local. But let us suppose an equally great master-piece, equally simple and direct and full of the mingling of stateliness and tender intimacy, to have for its subject an *Indian* mother and her babe. Will it be more loved, or less, by its devotee?

Whoever chose the pictures that are painted on the walls of the Jeypore museum, understood the greatness of the past of Indian art, and understood, too, the direction in which to expect for it a mighty future. There is one of these pictures—taken from an illuminated manuscript, but enlarged by the copyists to some fifty or a hundred times the original size—which represents the great scene of Yudhishthira's Gambling. This picture is a blaze of scarlet and gold, full of portraits, full of movement, a marvel of beauty. It is true that no modern artist could have painted in such unawareness of what we call perspective. But it is also true that no modern artist who has yet appeared, and indeed no one since the age of the missal-painters themselves, would have been able so to fill the same space with splendour of life and pattern. And it is certain that India does not want to lose these greater qualities, in gaining what is, from an artistic point of view, the less.

It is, however, a characteristic of great styles that they can assimilate new knowledge without self-degradation. The creator of this gambling scene would have known quite well what to do with a little added science about vanishing points and the centre of vision! Such knowledge would have left its impress on all he did, but it would never have led him to sacrifice his beauty and purity of colour, nor his love of sumptuousness and magnificence, nor his knack of hitting off vividly a likeness or a mood, nor his power of making of a picture a piece of decoration. There is such a thing as a national *manner* in art, and India needs only to add the technical knowledge of Europe to this manner of her own. Not that it is to be supposed that correct perspective is exclusively characteristic of the West. A small picture known as the Coronation of Sita and Rama was bought recently for the Calcutta Art Gallery. Behind the throne, in this beautiful little painting, is the palace of Ayodhya, and behind the palace, the river, with its ships, and fields, with armies under review and what not. And in all this work of the date of 1700 or thereabouts, and of what may for convenience be known as the Lucknow School, the perspective is quite perfect, while at the same time, for harmony of tints and quality of design, it is equal to the best of its forerunners. Never was anything in a mediæval Dutch picture more detailed than this palace of Ayodhya by some unknown master. It is built of white marble and open, much of it, to the sky; and here, with a magnifying glass, we may see the cows feeding, the horses ready saddled in their stalls, every camel and elephant and banner in its place, and all the long courts and apartments converging in most admirable order towards the horizon, like some fair City of Heaven seen in a dream.

But if so many and such noble characteristics had already been attained by Indian art, what, it may be asked, is the quality in European painting which has so fascinated the Indian Art student, as to lead him out of his own path into endeavours which have hitherto been for the most part as

ill-conceived as their execution was futile and disastrous? In nine out of ten cases the student will answer that their truth to nature is the great charm and attraction of European pictures. This is very flattering to the art of the West, but alas, he who knows more of that art sees deeper and shakes his head. This 'truth to nature' of which the young disciple prates is usually mere hardness and coarseness. Nature's greatest beauties, like those of the soul, are spiritual and elusive. Quite the loveliest thing I ever saw in Greek art was not she whom Heine calls 'Our dear Lady of Milo,' but a drawing taken from a vase and painted out by Miss Jane Harrison, of a maiden riding on a swan. Her hair is tightly braided, somewhat like a coif, and everything about her dainty person is suggestive of the Puritan rather than the classic, some sweet Elaine or Gretchen or Ushabala, may be, of a people who really understood the beautiful, not in bare flesh and protrusive muscles merely, but in all its phases, wherever it was to be found. Similarly, difficult as the present generation of art-students may find it to believe, the worn face of a Hindu widow with its fugitive smile and deep abiding sorrow, may be better worth drawing, as well as more difficult to draw than the admired and boasted charms of wealth and youth and health. The experienced critic of European art itself knows well how true this is, and even in the Sistine Madonna will see less of a beautiful Roman woman than of the temperament and mind of the man Raphael. A picture is not a photograph. Art is not science. Creation is not mere imitation. The clay figures of Lucknow and Krishnanagar do not, charming as they are, represent a high type of sculpture. But even if fidelity to nature were the highest criterion of painting, what about the portraits of the Nawabs of Oudh that hang in the gallery at Lucknow? It is true that these great canvases have been copied from tiny miniatures. But has any one ever seen more splendid portraits? From that first Viceroy despatched from Delhi and gazing out over time and space, with sense of the infinitude of hope, to the very last, through all the list, each



man stands before us living. Perhaps the least interesting of the portraits is that of the greatest of those kings, Asaf-ud-Daulah, the Well-Beloved. But they are all there, even that ancestor, second or third from the last sovereign, who was so renowned for his beauty that in the bazaar to this day there are men who cherish other portraits of him as their most prized possession.

Truth to nature, then, is not uniquely characteristic of western art, but in some degree or other must needs distinguish all its developments everywhere. Much of the joy of a great picture, indeed, is that in it we see nature as the painter saw it, often in an aspect vastly more beautiful than any we could have caught ourselves. There is a fragment in Griffith's book on Ajanta, of a woman clasping the feet of an image, taken from the frescoes in those caves. Here we have the work of an artist who combined two different qualities in a marvellous degree. He saw the human body as the Greeks saw it, round, strong, and nobly vigorous. And he saw the soul as the mediæval Catholic saw it, in an agony of prayer. It may be that along some such line of reconciling and revealing power lies the future of art in India. For certainly these are the two great opportunities offered by this country, —to know the human form, and to recognise the expression of overwhelming emotion, especially in worship.

But what is it, then, in European art, that tempts the Indian artist into emulation? The attraction lies, I take it, in *the opportunity which the European conception of art offers to the individual artist*. Art in the West is not merely the hereditary occupation of a craftsman. It has become, in modern times at least, a language through which great minds can express their outlook on the world. It is, in fact, one of the modes of poetry, and as such is open perforce to all inspiration, wherever and however it may be born. In India on the contrary, it has always been, or tended to be, treated as a craft, and more or less restricted, therefore, to a caste.

Now caste-education has the advantage of causing accu-

mulation of skill from generation to generation. In the case of the goldsmiths, for example, we should quickly detect a degradation of knowledge and taste, due to the sudden advent of workers from without. A similar deterioration may be witnessed any day in Calcutta, as having befallen the art of dyeing. For undoubtedly it has been by the setting aside of the taste and judgment of hereditary craftsmen, in favour of new and untried tints, that the feeling of those who, in matters of colour, are the uneducated, has become dominant in the community. So that, in spite of brightness and daring, the former beauty of Indian dyeing has given place to a state of things more fit for tears than laughter.

On the other hand, in all such cases, we must remember that doubtless the monotony of the older style paved the way in each instance for its sudden and universal abandonment. For an art that is followed by a hereditary guild tends to an unendurable sameness, tends to become ridden by conventions, till at last the mind of the community revolts, and seeks new ideals. This is unquestionably true of painting. The miniatures of Delhi and Lucknow might be skilful portraits, growing in cleverness from generation to generation. But they lacked elements of newness, lacked indeed the power and the opportunity to create such elements. The desirability of striking out some great new style could not occur to the minds of these painters. For caste produces habit, and habit, though it heightens skill, tends to limit imagination.

In a guild of painters, then, drawn not from any single caste, but from the nation as a whole, the first characteristic that we have a right to expect is vastness and freedom of imagination. These artists are not limited by any rule in their choice of a subject, nor in their treatment of it. They are workmen, it is true, even as their fathers were, for all painters are primarily workmen. But they are also poets, dreamers and prophets of the future. Art, socially considered, therefore, has in our time gone through a great transition in India. And just as in the Europe of the thirteenth century,

Giotto, the master-painter of a similar transition, left us the highest culture of his period in his works,—giving to the Florence that lay thrilled under the shadow of Dante, as Lubkë so beautifully says, “a *Divina Commedia* carved in stone,”—so now and always the artist becomes free from the conventions of the caste, only that he may submit himself to a greater convention which is the mind and heart of his age. The highest art is always charged with spiritual intensity, with intellectual and emotional revelation. It follows that it requires the deepest and finest kind of education. The man who has not entered into the whole culture of his epoch can hardly create a supreme expression of that culture. The man whose own life is not tense with the communal struggle cannot utter to those about him the inner meaning of their secret hope.

In the great ages of the society, one thought permeates all classes alike. One mind, one spirit is everywhere. And this unity of ideal carries up on its high tides even the hidden craftsman in his secluded corner, till he becomes the mouthpiece of a national impulse. This fact it was that gave their greatness to the carvings at Elephanta, and the paintings at Ajanta. For speech is noteworthy, not in itself, but by dint of the power behind, that presses forward through the words. And so with Art. Its rebirth in India today can only take place, if it be consciously made the servant and poet of the mighty dream of an Indian Nationality. For the same reason, there is little or nothing in England now that can be called Art. An imperialised people have nothing to struggle for, and without the struggle upwards there can be no great genius, no great poetry. Therefore, in periods of empire Art must always undergo decay. But the reverse is the case with ourselves. We have to struggle for everything, —struggle to make our thought clear and definite; struggle to carry and scatter it broadcast, that we may all be made one in its name; struggle again, when this is done, to make it a reality to others as well as ourselves.

While this is the case, let no one dream that the rendering

of a blue pot, or a flame-coloured flower, or a pretty scene, or an interesting group, is the work of the painter. Far better were crudeness of colour with agony of thought behind. Far better were the rudest drawing with the weight of symbolism heavy on the drooping eyelids of the humanity portrayed. For Art, like science, like education, like industry, like trade itself, must now be followed "For the remaking of the Motherland" and for no other aim.

## II

Art, then, is charged with a spiritual message,—in India today, the message of the Nationality. But if this message is actually to be uttered, the profession of the painter must come to be regarded, not simply as a means of earning livelihood, but as one of the supreme ends of the highest kind of education. Thus, an Art-school now-a-days would need to be a University; the common talk amongst the students out of hours, to cover all the accepted conclusions, all the burning questions, of the day; their reading to be marked by an insatiable curiosity for all the noble secrets of the world.

For, it is undeniable that everything great, whether for good or evil, begins with the earnestness of a group of students. When men have reached a decision on any of the critical questions of life, it is already too late for them to come together. The world-shaking confederacies are never made up of masters. One mature mind and many disciples, or many young minds struggling together: these are the groups through which power is developed. For proof of this, we might look at the movements which have grown up in Calcutta itself, as the result of the ferment amongst the students in the time of Keshab Chandra Sen. The whole of the *Naba Bidhan* with its indisputable powers of moral education, the whole of the *Sadharan Brahmo Samaj*, with its fearless and unselfish advocacy of every progressive movement, and the whole of the work of the Order of



Ramakrishna, to name only three definite associations, are our inheritance from the students of that time.

Instances farther from home abound. Who can doubt that the vicious theories of Imperialism propagated by the man Curzon and his school, are the result of the stand that made itself popular amongst the sons of the privileged classes at Oxford in his student days? Lord Ripon, on the other hand, in *his* young manhood, was one of the innermost circle of that group of "Christian Socialists" that also numbered amongst its members Charles Kingsley and Tom Hughes. And it was here, as their friends knew well, that he and his wife trained and developed that noble partisanship for the defeated, that instinct of justice and equality, for which their names will shine so long in history.

The Fabian Society of Socialists are one of the central sources in London today of the culture of the democratic idea. And they began as a group of young and hardworked men and women, meeting on Saturday afternoons to study certain books, and discuss the social questions involved.

The London positivists—another ganglionic centre of moral impulses in the intellectual life of England,—were, a generation or so ago, a knot of brilliant young Oxford men, captured by the great Guru, Congreve, the English clergyman who renounced so much to follow the faith of Auguste Comte.

And the Mediæval movement in English Art,—its most notable development, probably, during the nineteenth century,—began with young men, Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon, and others.

No. The old may have justice on their side in deprecating their own powers. But the young have no right to doubt themselves. The future is theirs. They, and no others, are born to inherit the earth.

Now, Universities are built up of thought and hope, not out of mere organisation alone. Let two men take up the study of art in the right spirit, and they will change the whole art-world of India. Let the men of a single art-school

understand comprehensively the problem before them, and the new art is already born. For of life comes forth life, but without the quickening of the spirit, there can be nothing but death.

But how can a man be a painter of Nationality? Can an abstract idea be given form and clothed with flesh, and painted? Undoubtedly it can. Indeed if we had questioned this, Mr. A. N. Tagore's exquisite picture of "Bharatmata" would have proved its possibility. But it cannot be done all at once. Such an achievement lies amongst the higher reaches of artistic attainment, and would be impossible for the beginner, with his foot on the first rung of the ladder. How is he to proceed, that he may gradually rise to the delineation of such great ideal forms?

In the first place, it must be understood that art is concerned with the pleasure which we derive from sight. Not with the knowledge. The picture that ministers to *that* need is a scientific diagram, merely! The fundamental requisite, then, is a truthfulness of sense. Without the ability to decide promptly and finally that we *like or dislike* a certain delineation, a certain situation, we shall inevitably go wrong in art. Not every scene is fit for a picture. And this truth needs emphasising in modern India especially, because here an erroneous conception of fashion has gone far to play havoc with the taste of the people. In a country in which that posture is held to be illbred,\* every home contains a picture of a young woman lying full length on the floor and writing a letter on a lotus-leaf! As if a sight that would outrage decorum in actuality, could be beautiful in imagination! In a country in which romantic emotion is never allowed to show itself in public, pictures of the wooing of Arjuna and Subhadra abound.

These errors proceed from a false ideal of correctness, which leads us to be untrue to the dictates of our own feeling. Under the influence of such misconception, I have

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\* I ought to state here, that I do not know of any country in which a young lady may stretch herself on the floor in public. N.

seen an Indian girl pick out of a collection of photographs the most unattractive nudities of Puvis de Chavannes, from the Paris Sorbonne, and declare that of them all she liked these best. It was evident to kindly on-lookers that she had not taken the pains to examine her choice closely, but imagined—poor child!—that they must be the correct thing. Similarly, it is not uncommon to find in the guest-room of an Indian bungalow, pictures of ladies smoking cigarettes and otherwise comforting themselves, the exposure of which, in a European house, could only be intended as a deliberate insult to the guest.

In all these cases alike, the mistake arises from the cold-blooded endeavour to make ourselves like a given thing because it is supposed to be 'high art,' instead of for the simple reason that it affords pleasure. Pictures of the nude and semi-nude are always best avoided in India, since it is almost impossible here, at present, to attain the education necessary for their true discrimination, and mistakes in taste on such a subject are dangerous to moral dignity. There is, nevertheless, a certain grandeur of reverence—a sense of the impersonal in such ancient works as the Venus of Milo, in the mediæval 'Girl taking a Thorn out of her Foot' by Donatello, and in the modern 'Triptych of Love' by G. F. Watts, which lifts the human form out of the realm of the merely physical, and suffuses it with spiritual meaning. But to those who find in themselves no perception of this fact, and to those, who have had no experience in foreign art, such a statement must sound like wordy vapouring, and the expert rule undoubtedly is that the nude be passed by altogether.

This training and heightening of sense-perception, till the eye becomes like a perfectly regulated instrument, reliable as to what it chooses and what it rejects, is more important and more difficult than would readily be suspected. In Indian art, particularly, there is a tendency to become too intellectual or too technical, which is apt periodically to override the artistic instinct, and destroy art. Thus in the

Lahore Museum, after a long series of exquisite ancient sculptures which may or may not show the influence of Bactrian or Chinese craftsmen, we come with a gasp upon the emaciated figure of the *Fasting Buddha*. In Jeypore, also, we hear of a skeleton Kali. Now these things are wrong. They mark the dying power of an art-period. Art is not science. The pursuit of the beautiful—not necessarily the sensuously beautiful, but always the beautiful,—is her true function. The artist has a right to refuse, as not suitable to his purpose, all that to his particular temperament appears as unbeautiful. Indeed we instinctively assume him to have done this, and believe that we may praise or condemn his taste and judgment accordingly.

In nature, then, there is much which is not beautiful, and the artist must judge continually between her diverse elements. In a picture we want neither the mean, nor the muddy, nor the confused. Hardly any scene can be counted lovely that is without *light*. Even water is as meaningless in a picture as huddled crowns of cocoanut palms, if it be unlighted. I had long admired certain Dutch pictures in the London national gallery, without being able to discover the secret of their spell. They were by a man called De Hoogh, and consisted of little courts and cooking rooms with red pavements. Nothing very striking in the subjects, for as a matter of personal taste, I immensely prefer Madonnas and Angels to kitchens. At last I took my puzzle to a great artist. "De Hoogh is one of the few people who have ever known how to paint sunlight", was his reply to my question. At last the mystery of the curious uplifting of spirit was explained! I returned to De Hoogh and found it true. His red brick floors lay always in the light.

*Contrast* of various sorts, is, again, a great element in beauty, contrast within unity. So of course is colour. Amongst studies by Indian art-students, I have seen many oil-paintings of dull unlighted tanks lined by thatched huts, the whole overshadowed by heavy forbidding trees, painted in blue-green. Now these depressing renderings of depressing



scenes were true enough to the fact, even to the fact of many a place we love. In outline, they were good enough. Yes, but a single luminous touch, on house or pond or leaves, would perhaps have changed the whole, as by the stroke of miracle. There is another picture often seen, of the child Dhruva making his way into the forest. It is a picture of confusion, without one point of radiance. Wild undergrowth in muddy blue-green does not make a picture. To the child Dhruva, as he actually went by the forest-ways to his heart's desire, there was, it appears to me, some great sense of overarching loftiness, of spreading starlit sky, of open path, a wondrous call and invitation of the Infinite leading him on and on into the sleeping silence in the depth of the forest. These things are not suggested by the picture we know. Moreover, if the artist had realised that his duty was to paint what gave him *joy*, instead of that, merely, which he had often seen, that picture would have been very very different.

Thus a true picture must be luminous, and it must be suggestive. It must, moreover, have a beautiful subject, which at once rouses our love and aspiration. Now Indian roads and streets and river-banks are full of subjects which would make such pictures, only we must have a *heart* to see them by. It is through the heart that the artist must do all his seeing. Indian women, with their incomparable draperies; the beggars with the staff and begging-bowl that hints of Shiva; labour, beautiful in all lands, but here still further dignified by its wonderful gentleness and refinement; the priest in the temple, the boatman on the river, the mother with her child, the bride stepping forth to the bridal, do you Indian students of Indian art see nothing in any of these that you long to record? Can you not go through life seeking for the glimpses that open up the great vista? They are seen oftener in this country than anywhere in Europe! In almost any home one might find the group from which one could paint the Nativity of Christ and the *Nanda-Utsab* of Krishna. Have you not felt the beauty of the little earthen lamp set alight at evening beneath the Tulsi plant? Have

you not breathed the peace of the Shanti-jal ceremony in the gathering dusk? Is there for you no mystic significance in the Baran dala? Believe me, without some such interpretation, some such appeal, the mere technical excellences of which you learn to prate in English schools are bone without flesh; they are worse than valueless.

## INDIAN SCULPTURE AND PAINTING\*

We have here for the first time a book about Indian art written by a European, which expresses, throughout its pages, a feeling of love and respect for India and her people. To Mr. Havell, Indian art is no mere toy of commerce, nor is it even the fruit of some rich bygone period, irretrievably departed. He sees India past, present and future, as one. The builders of fortresses and tombs, of palaces and temples are the same Indian people, who are alive today, and could do as much again, if need arose, or opportunity called. Seeing behind each historic achievement of our art, the social and psychological background that gave it birth, he finds, in our present continuity with that background, the rich promise of the future. Indian society is still unspoilt, in this author's eyes, for art and industries. As long as the handicraft dominates the situation, India remains in that fertile mediæval condition, out of which the cathedrals of Europe were built, and her great pictures painted, but which Europe for love of gain, has cast for ever behind her.

"India, unlike Europe," says our author, "has a still living, traditional, and national art, intimately bound up with the social and religious life of the people; and this art, if we knew it better, might help both Europeans and Indians to a closer mutual sympathy and understanding. But the secularised and denationalised art of Europe has no affinity with the living art of India, and we, aliens in race, thought, and religion, have never taken anything but a *dilettante* archæological, or commercial interest in it. Its deeper meanings are hidden from us, and those spiritual longings and desires which come straight from the heart of a people, to find expression in their poetry, music, and their art, strike no chord of sympathy in ours."

But this passage must not be held by Indian readers to

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\* By E. B. Havell, London, John Murray, 1908.

imply that we, because we still have a "living, traditional and national art," are to hold blindly by every chance thought and impulse that comes to us artistically, believing that we are divinely inspired in this matter and therefore unfailingly correct in every particular. Such a fallacy could not tempt us, in other subjects. India, almost alone amongst the nations, has still, in like fashion, "a living traditional and national" logic of her own. But this does not mean that every Indian tyro is logically infallible! A severe training would be necessary, for the most Indian of Indians, before he could venture to trust his own opinion against that of the pundits of Nuddea, for instance, and the training required to qualify the judgment in art is not less stern and difficult than that for logic. We have just been going through the least hopeful and most chaotic transition that has ever overtaken us as a people, in art. Under European Commercialism, our decorative faculty has been shaken to its very roots. Our architecture is undermined by the desire for cheapness, and the high fiscal value of materials. Our nobler ideals have been almost eclipsed by the love of cheap notoriety. If we are ever to emerge out of this confusion, we can only do so by patiently building up a great art on a basis of sincere admiration of the truly beautiful for true reasons. But in order to know how to begin directing this force of admiration, we want the help of a competent mind and this is what Mr. Havell's book gives us. It is an account of how a trained mind may look to relate itself to Indian art, primarily to the great works of the past, but secondarily also to the possibility of present and future. From this point of view the work is as useful to the European as to the Indian reader. But in its communication of courage and inspiration, it is of supreme value to us.

Our author rightly feels that Indian art is only to be understood through Indian ideals. He points out that the current idea, that India derived her art from Greece, is of very little consequence so long as it is admitted that her *ideals* were not derived from Greece. "It is of course true that every nationality, when it seeks to work out its artistic ideals, makes use



of any agents, native or foreign, which happen to be within reach. But the Greeks no more created Indian sculpture and painting than they created Indian philosophy and religion. Their aesthetic ideals were essentially different from those of India, and they never at any time imposed them upon Indian art, which, in its distinctive and essential character, is entirely the product of Indian thought and Indian artistic genius."

This is a fine argument, finely stated. Throughout his published writings, Mr. Havell always answers the charge of the derivative character of Indian works of art, by pointing to the calm and assured orientalism of their style. If the Taj could really have been the product of an Italian mind, the fact would have constituted the greatest miracle in history. If Hellas had really given birth to an art so unlike her own as the Indian, it would have been the supreme paradox. Hitherto, as he very aptly points out, the European criticism of Indian art has lacked the aid of minds with a thorough artistic training. Art cannot be studied as a side issue of archæology or literature. It is an end and a mode, in and for itself. Only those who are capable of judging of the differences between Greek and Indian art, are competent to discuss what either may owe to the other.

The European preconception that India at all times borrows everything from the West, has been unspeakably discouraging to Indian originality and self-respect. The usual movement of ideas like races is from East to West, but, as in the present age so also in the past, there have been back-currents, and reflex trade-routes occasionally, and the development of the child does often, after maturity, influence that of the parent, so that the Hellenic contact is not inconceivable as a powerful factor in Indian evolution. That there was such a contact in the fourth century B. C., is a known historical fact, and its duration and energy, are points that yet remain to be determined, as elements affecting the truth about Indian sculpture.

Mr. Havell thus sums up the historic argument:

“At the beginning of the Christian Era, and for some centuries previously, when the classic art of Europe had already passed its zenith, India was drawing in towards herself a great flood of artistic culture from Western Asia, derived originally from the far-distant sources of Babylon and Assyria, but strongly tinged with the subsidiary stream which was then flowing back into it from Greece and Rome. Out of these eclectic influences joined with the old indigenous traditions, Indian religious thought quickly formulated a new synthesis of art, which in its turn became the source from which other great currents flowed North, South, East and West.

“In these early centuries of the Christian Era, and from this Indian source, came the inspiration of the great schools of Chinese painting which from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries stood first in the whole world. Successive hordes of Asiatic invaders, beginning with those which flocked like vultures to gather the spoils of the decaying Roman Empire, kept open the highways between East and West, and brought a reflex of the same traditions into Europe. The influence of India's artistic culture can be clearly traced, not only in Byzantine art, but in the Gothic cathedrals of the middle ages, Europe is very apt to dwell upon the influence of Western art and culture upon Asiatic civilisation, but the far greater influence of Asiatic thought, religion, and culture upon the art and civilisation of Europe is rarely appraised at its proper value.

“From the seaports of her Western and Eastern coasts India at this time also sent streams of colonists, missionaries, and craftsmen all over Southern Asia, Ceylon, Siam, and far distant Cambodia. Through China and Korea Indian art entered Japan about the middle of the sixth century. About A. D. 603 Indian colonists from Gujarat brought Indian art into Java, and at Borobudur in the eighth and ninth centuries, Indian Sculpture achieved its greatest triumphs. Some day, when European art criticism has widened its present narrow horizon, and learnt the foolishness of using the art

standards of Greece and Italy as a tape wherewith to measure and appraise the communings of Asia with the Universal and the Infinite, it will grant the nameless sculptors of Borobudur an honourable place amongst the greatest artists the world has ever known."

Full value is here given to any direct influence that Greek art may have had upon Indian. But it will be noticed that even accepting this at its highest estimate the later art of India cannot be accounted for, unless, as here, we postulate those indigenous elements whose vigour and importance made it possible in the earlier period to assimilate foreign influences. This has to be understood, that without a genuine creative faculty of our own, all the art universities of the world would be powerless to make original creators of us. They could make nothing more than images or reflections of creation. The Bharhut sculptures in the Calcutta museum are witness sufficient, to any one who cares to go and see them, of an art which was Indian before the contact of India with classical Europe. Those sculptures themselves probably date from about 150 B.C. No one has ever suggested any Greek influence in them and it is clear that the hands that undertook to work on such a scale in stone had received their previous training in perishable materials like wood and clay. Whatever foreign influences may be brought to bear, the one question of importance, with regard to any art history, is whether or not there was enough native vigour and faculty to result in the eventual assimilation of those influences. Mr. Havell's whole book is a demonstration of the answer to this question, in the case of India.

Our author's next point is one of great delicacy and significance. Still combating the European idea that India's place in great art is to be marked as absent, he takes up the question of ideals. Sculpture is appraised, in Europe, according to its qualities of physical portraiture. Anatomical and physiological perfection are to it the starting-point of all beauty. "Imitation is the real and only end of all fine art." Really this last sentence does not do justice to the intention

of European art. The Zeus of Olympus and the Moses of Michael Angelo were not imitations of anything in nature. But undoubtedly the notion that "imitation is the real and only end of all fine art" is the *common* conception of Europe today, and, is that element in European art which has been grasped by India, in the persons of Ravi Varma and his followers.

Mr. Havell boldly sets forth the theorem that Indian sculpture has from the beginning had a totally different ideal. According to him, the Indian artist believes that the highest type of beauty must be sought after, not in the imitation, or selection, of human or natural forms, but in the endeavour to suggest something finer and more subtle than ordinary physical beauty. "When the Indian artist models a representation of the Deity with an attenuated waist and abdomen, and suppresses all the smaller anatomical details, so as to obtain an extreme simplicity of contour, the European declares that he is sadly ignorant of anatomy and incapable of imitating the higher forms of nature. But the Indian artist would create a higher and more subtle type, and suggest that spiritual beauty which, according to his philosophy, can only be reached by the surrender of worldly attachments and the suppression of worldly desires."

This argument, the author carries into considerable detail. The self-controlled man being the Indian spiritual ideal, it is clear that there must be a physical type corresponding to it. And this he finds admirably suggested in that one of the thirty-two principal Lakshanas (or 'marks of Shiva', as they are called, in Modern Bengal) which demands that "the upper part of the body shall be like that of a lion."

As Mr. Havell points out, the most striking characteristic of the Indian lion is its broad, deep shoulders, and narrow contracted abdomen, making it wonderfully analogous to the new spiritualised body which the Indian sculptures aimed at giving Buddha after his enlightenment, "broad-shouldered, deep-chested, golden-coloured, smooth-skinned, supple and lithe as a young lion." In thus going back upon



the sources of our greatest creations, and making clear to us our own master ideals, Mr. Havell has rendered an immense service to Indian criticism.

The illustrations of this wonderful volume are unexampled in their variety and interest. India is a country whose attainments can be measured still better by what she has done for others than by what she has kept for herself. It is in the circle of daughter civilisations that we find the surest records of what she has achieved. Our author has been well advised in drawing upon the art of Tibet, Nepal, Ceylon and Java for his examples. Most of those Indians who read his pages will learn, we fear, for the first time, of the Indian Colony who wrought the great temple of Borobudur in Java. If we want to realise the immeasurable difference of spirit between the semi-Greek art of Gandhara, in the first or second century of the Christian Era, and genuine Indian sculpture, secure in conscious possession of its own sources of inspiration we cannot do better than compare the Lorian Tangai relief of Buddha Preaching with the same as treated at Borobudur. Well may Mr. Havell say that the Indian ideal was never realised in Gandharan art and any one who has visited the Gandharan sculptures in the Calcutta Museum and stood face to face with the smart military looking young men 'who pose uncomfortably there in the attitudes of Indian asceticism', their moustaches touched with all the hairdresser's latest art, will echo his words. There is nothing here of the lofty calm and simplicity of the Buddhas of Magadha, nor is there the spontaneous sweetness and gentleness of the Dhyani Buddha of Borobudur. How gradual is the building up through century after century of those great ideals that later generations are to inherit with their first breath! Well may the writer say, "European art has, as it were, its wings clipped: it knows only the beauty of earthly things. Indian art soaring into the highest empyrean, is ever trying to bring down to earth something of the beauty of the things above."

## HAVELL ON HINDU SCULPTURE\*

There will always be some who feel that too much attention has been given, for a work of this kind, to the semi-political question of the influence exerted, or not exerted on Indian art by Greek. Such persons will tell us that the whole history of art is told in the history of patterns, following the lines and appearing at the crossing points of ancient trade-routes. They will assure us that the type of the Buddha in a Lorian Tangai sculpture is a vague and intangible factor, but that the commonplace ornament of the throne and pedestal, the bole of a date-palm laid across, instead of the beautiful lotus-seat of true Indian art,—and the badly executed forms of the pious beasts in their caves, are all very much more important as establishing data for the origin of the work. Such persons will beg us therefore to abandon the somewhat degrading dispute, and will advise us to analyse the patterns and designs we find about us, and can trace in historic ornament, by way of laying sure foundations for a future history of the origin of Indian art. It may be that these critics are right. Yet in a popular history, like this which is before us, the question could not have been evaded, since it is bound up with that supreme incident, the story of Buddhism. How great was the power of an idea which could dominate and synthetise the cosmopolitan whirlpool of Taxila and its neighbourhood, immediately before the Christian Era! How great was the power of Buddhism, and how far it travelled, and in what forms it has appeared later, are all secrets, indeed, that have not yet been worked out in full. When he begins to deal with Hinduism, however, Mr. Havell is as helpful as when he is speaking of the better-known Buddhist sculpture. Indian men and women of today need a key to the understanding of their own religious art, even more than to the appreciation of that of a great past epoch.

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\* *Indian Sculpture and Painting* by E. B. Havell.

We cannot too clearly realise that Buddhism is Hinduism dominated and organised by a single master personality. It claimed only to be the system accepted by a religious order, and perhaps for this very reason, it exerted an overwhelming attraction upon all parts of the nation, and created arts, literatures, and nationalities. It was long senior to either of the other two world-faiths which have gained coherence and rationality by being man-led and disciplined. But whatever we may find to say about Buddhism, we have always to come back, sooner or later, to the fact that it was Hinduism. It was Hinduism working at its highest potentiality, of unity, purpose, and organisation; but the miracle of all miracles would be the finding of elements in it, which had not first existed in the mother system. And what is true religiously, is true also artistically. Even the sculpture of Buddhism, supreme in quality as that undoubtedly is, springs out of the soil, and stands out against the background of Hindu Sculpture, and often cannot be disentangled from it. The impulse that we call Buddhism reaches its noblest, largest and most distinct expression in the temple of Borobudur in Java, between 650 and 750 A.D. But even this expression cannot be understood, without reference back to the world that had already produced the rails of Sanchi, Bharhut, and Amara-vati, and the temple of Elephanta. For the great Rails represent Hindu art, holding up the Buddhist ideal to an admiring world. The Sculptures that we find on them, rendered in stone, have already been familiar for ages to wood-carvers, image-makers, and plaster-decorators. Buddhism, springing suddenly to the throne of the world, and dreaming of eternal memorials, in 250 B.C., seized for its purpose the means that lay to its hand, which had been provided for it, by the great Indian civilisation to which it belonged. Only gradually does the daughter-faith disentangle itself, emerging as a triumphant and wholly individualised entity at Borobudur. Undoubtedly it was enabled to do this, by the presence on the throne of Java of a prince who belonged to one of the Rajput, or royal

organising tribes of North-Western India. This sovereign, desiring to make a Cathedral, could imitate no better model than the ancient Indian abbeys of the motherland. But, apart from this personal preference of one man or one family, or even of a throne supported by a powerful religious order, the civilisation of Java was Hinduistic, and this fact is well indicated in her art, from 950 to 1500 A.D. To this period belongs the statue of Durga slaying Mahishasura, (xx p. 62), of which Mr. Havell says :

"Judged by any standard, it is a wonderful work of art, grandly composed, splendidly thorough in technique, expressing with extraordinary power and concentrated passion the wrath and might of the Supreme Beneficence roused to warfare with the spirit of evil."

It is Hinduism, again, which has produced the great literatures of the whole Indian world, and therefore the arts that illustrate them. The sculptured Ramayanas and Mahabharatas of Javanese, Cambodian, and southern temples, are all equally the creation of Indian workers and Indian ideals. In the cave-temple of Elephanta, Hinduism reaches the same isolation and detachment as Buddhism in Borobudur. Of this Sculpture Mr. Havell says :

"In the cave-temples of Elephanta, Ellora, and Ajanta, Indian sculptors played with chiaroscuro in great masses of living rock with the same feeling as the Gothic cathedral builders, or as Wagner played with tonal effects, hewing out on a colossal scale the grander contrasts of light and shade to give a fitting atmosphere of mystery and awe to the paintings and sculptures which told the endless legends of Buddha or the fantastic myths of the Hindu Valhalla."

It is the vastness and power of Indian conceptions that makes the skill of their sculptors so impressive. Nothing greater has ever been carved in stone than the Shiva as Bhairava, at Elephanta.

Hindu sculpture has a wonderful capacity for grand portraiture. As examples of this, we have two fine stone-heads of Bhima taken from Java (p. 142). Of these we read :



"At first sight the suggestion they give of ancient Egyptian or Greek art is almost startling. There is the greatness of line, splendid generalisation, and profound abstraction of the best Egyptian sculpture, and all the refinement of Greek art. But the similarity comes only from the kinship which exists between all truly great works of art, for these types are wholly Indian."

Mr. Havell has, in a high degree, the conviction that is essential to all writers on things Indian, namely, that behind the children exists the mother, behind the detail, India herself. It is this conviction that enables him to use, with free hand and unerring instinct, the fine bronzes of Southern India and Nepal, the painted banners of Tibet, the stone of Java, and everything from any part, that comes in his way, as an illustration of the truth he is seeking to convey. It is this which makes his work so valuable in its catholicity. Of the beautiful Tibetan Tara from the Calcutta Art Gallery, he says:

"The gracious expression and movement are full of fine feeling, and the dignity of sentiment is fully sustained by the exquisite technique. The very difficult position of the feet and lower limbs is treated with consummate skill and knowledge of anatomical structure, showing that the artist was by no means deficient in the science of his art!"

It is in the great Javanese Prajnaparamita, however, that our author finds the Indian statue which might well be taken as the supreme effort of human art.

We are familiar with this concept in India. There is a similar statue, taken doubtless from North Bengal, and made under the Pal Dynasty, in the Calcutta Museum. But in Bengal, the figure itself could not be detached from its theological background, and beautiful as it is, it is less overwhelming in its beauty, for being loaded with Dhyanī Buddhas and other conventional symbols. In the Javanese example we have an added instance of that great selective and discriminating genius which is so constantly at work in the art of that country. All superfluous details have been

discarded. "Seated on a lotus-flower, the symbol of purity and divine birth, in the pose of a Yogini, Prajnaparamita is making with her hands the Mudra, or symbolic sign, of spiritual instruction. Her face has that ineffable expression of heavenly grace which Geovanni Bellini, above all other Italian masters, gave to his Madonnas. Prajnaparamita, as the consort of the Adi Buddha, was regarded as the mother of the universe."

Thus a people who had almost forgotten that sculpture was possible to them, are shown their own efforts in this art at their highest and best. Sculpture is like architecture in requiring the protection and encouragement of a throne for its highest development. It is unlike architecture in having little or no domestic necessity, to keep it living and strong in the absence of such a power. The only possible substitute for this is a high standard of education common to rich and poor alike in order that great patrons may arise, for the discovery and sustenance of new Indian sculptors who shall renew the triumphs of the Indian past, and prove that the motherland is one in genius as she is one in time.

## HAVELL ON INDIAN PAINTING

A picture has, properly speaking, two functions, with both of which the cheapness of modern commerce has sadly interfered. One of these is its place in architecture; the other is its place in the book. The first was developed in India to an extraordinary degree, under the Buddhistic civilisations of the first thousand years of the Christian Era. The second was equally highly developed under the auspices of the Mogul dynasty of Delhi. In both cases, the basis on which a great art was reared, is still extant. In any village, or on the old river-boats, we may see the rude mural decorations, processions of horses, dogs and elephants, or pictures of tiger-hunts, or marriage ceremonies, all interspersed with sterns and scrolls, and half-geometrical flowers,—out of which grew the noble works of Ajanta, and Sigiriya in Ceylon. In every province, despite paint-boxes, filled with horrible aniline dyes, linger the old school artists, with their bazaar-pictures, so reminiscent of a glory that has passed.

Modern easel-painting is a compromise between these two functions. The picture of today aims at illustrating a single moment in a sustained intellectual conception, epic or natural, like the book-illustration. But it attempts to combine with this, the grandeur and breadth of wall-painting. It is more or less large, and yet it is detachable. In actual book-illustration, the thirst after perfection of the old masters has now been modified by considerations of easy mechanical reproduction, till specimens of the old work have become like precious jewels, to be sought after with eagerness and rarely found.

There can be no doubt that there is a great future in India for mural painting. The large halls of assembly that the coming era of nationality and democracy will popularise,—for purposes of education and of the civic life,—will all demand decoration, and undoubtedly that decoration will

take the form of painting, to a great extent. This painting will have three different subjects, the national ideals, the national history, and the national life. Amongst these shadows of noble thought, the men and women of the future will grow up. Against such a background, a constantly grander civic life will be moulded.

These village-halls, in which the deepening political consciousness of the future will find expression, have had their prototypes in India, in the Chaitya-halls of the Buddhist Viharas by means of which, as Mr. Hāvell very lucidly points out, one of the great world-schools has been developed in art.

“The universities of ancient India, like those of Takshashila, near the modern Peshawar, Nalanda in Bengal, and Śrīdhanya Kataka (Amaravati) on the banks of the Krishna, comprised schools of religious painting and sculpture and in these great culture-centres of India all foreign artistic ideas were gradually transformed by Indian thought, and nationalised.

“From them, also, the Indian art thus created radiated all over Asia in the great epoch dating from about the first century B.C. down to about the eighth century of our era. No doubt it was these schools that India owed the paintings of Ajanta as well as the sculptures of Amaravati, Ellora, and Elephanta.

“The early Buddhist records contain many allusions to ‘pictures halls’, which were no doubt the halls of monasteries painted with sacred subjects, like those of the sculpture galleries already described; or paintings on the walls of garden quadrangles, protected by verandahs, such as are commonly attached to royal palaces and private dwellings in Northern India. These were used as picture-galleries even in recent times, before Indian art fell into utter disrepute.”

Undoubtedly it was the existence of the great Chaitya-halls,—used as these were, in the Buddhist abbeys, for monastic chapters, general councils, worship, and university purposes,—that occasioned the rise of the magnificent



schools of Indian painting, whose remains we still find, in the caves of Ajanta.

It is clear, also, that such paintings must have been executed by members of the Order residing in the monastery itself, in the same way that the Dominican Convent of San Marco outside Florence has been decorated, by the hand of Fra Angelico. There can be no doubt that it was the monks themselves who spent their talent and energy in building, sculpturing or painting the ancient Viharas. This was the contribution of certain members to the common good. They required no reward for their services, beyond maintenance and the active sympathy and encouragement of their fellows. It is for this reason that monastic orders have always been able to do memorable work, in whatever direction they have applied themselves.

“The period covered by the religious paintings of Ajanta”, says Mr. Havell, “extends from about the second or first centuries before Christ to about the seventh century of our era, or over most of the great epoch of Indian art which has been reviewed in the previous chapters. Unfortunately, owing in a great measure to neglect and ill-treatment these beautiful paintings have lost all their original charm of colour, and are so damaged otherwise as to be at present only pitiable wrecks of what they have been. We can see in the best Ajanta paintings, especially in those of the caves numbered 16 or 17, the same intense love of nature or spiritual devotion as are evident in the sculptures of Borobudur.”

From the fragments published in the work of Mr. John Griffiths on Ajanta, it would seem that this combination of artistic ideals Hellenic and mediæval Catholic, was the most remarkable feature of the Ajanta pictures. But Mrs. C. I. Herringham, a distinguished art-critic who has seen them lately for the first time, has stated in England that their most striking distinction lies in their delineation of state-ceremonials and processions, and in the ease with which the artists discriminate between persons of low and of noble

race,—powers that the art of Europe, as she points out, had not yet acquired, in the time of Giotto, five hundred years later.

It is to the gem-like works of the court-painters of the Mogul period and after, that Mr. Havell has been obliged to go, for the bulk of his illustrations of Modern Indian painting. Messrs. John Murray & Sons are to be congratulated on the beauty of some of their reproductions of these, especially for the wonderful "Potrait Group by one of Shah Jahan's Court Painters" that forms the frontispiece of the whole volume.

But true to his own inspiration, Mr. Havell does not neglect the present. The charming "Circle of travellers round a camp-fire," which he gives as a specimen of the work of unknown artists today, has evidently suffered in reproduction. The lights are too defined, the touch too hard. Yet it is a typical Indian scene. If only Indian men and women were prepared to buy such works, there would be more produced. The artist has felt the thrill of the midnight scene under the trees: the hushed voices, the half-veiled woman listening in the doorway to the tale told in the flickering firelight, the sense of converging roads, of the parting, never again to meet, that the dawn will bring.

When we realise that it is our own want of culture that prevents our selecting and buying such pictures as this, we are able better to understand the depth of education that characterised the women of the Mogul Court when they collected some of the priceless manuscripts to be seen in the Khuda Bakhsh Library at Bankipore. It was the Queen Arzmand Banu—to whom afterwards the Taj was built—who spent 40,000 Rupees to buy, for her husband's birthday, the illuminated book that bears his signature. In great ages, woman is always educated, always competent, and often literary. Her ignorance marks the on-coming of national decadence.

Nothing could better illustrate at once the likeness and difference of the Mogul and the modern styles of painting,



than a comparison between such pictures as the portrait of Sadi and Mr. Tagore's illustration for Omar Khayyam.

There is a marvellous quality of truthfulness and imagination in the Mogul portraits. But the modern sets himself to convey the *mental* atmosphere of his subject. He so paints a man—seated on a roof, at sunrise,—that we follow him into his very dreams.

Sadi also is a poet, painted with book in hand, and intensity of thought upon his face. But this Omar seems to melt away into his own reverie.

The fault of the old painters may have been a leaning towards too great severity: the fault of the moderns is a tenderness and sentiment that approaches sometimes too near the verge of weakness.

There is no weakness in the final picture of the modern school, reproduced by Mr. Havell. Whatever we may think historically of the Flight of Lakshman Sen in 1203, before the Mohammedans,—and I for one do not accept a word of the current nonsense that would make of him a coward!—this picture by Surendra Nath Ganguly, is magnificent, strong, nervous, full of energy and vigour. The escape of a discrowned king speaks in every line. We could have named it, had there been no title. And after all, is not the moment portrayed, one of promise, if also of regret? Sadness for the occasion, promise for the art? The picture speaks of both. The boat waits by the palace-step. But—the door is left open, and in the grim determination of the face of the fugitive king, hope still lives! It is a moment of withdrawal rather than flight. In some remote fastness of his kingdom, Lakshman Sen will still live and reign. When the hour strikes, he will return again!

## INTRODUCTION TO THE 'IDEALS OF THE EAST'\*

Kakasu Okakura, the author of this work on Japanese Art Ideals—and the future author, as we hope, of a longer and completely illustrated book on the same subject—has been long known to his own people and to others as the foremost living authority on Oriental Archaeology and Art.

Although then young, he was made a member of the Imperial Art Commission which was sent out by the Japanese Government in the year 1886 to study the art history and movements of Europe and the United States. Far from being overwhelmed by this experience, Mr. Okakura only found his appreciation of Asiatic art deepened and intensified by his travels, and since that time he has made his influence felt increasingly in the direction of a strong re-nationalising of Japanese art in opposition to that pseudo-Europeanising tendency now so fashionable throughout the East.

On his return from the West, the Government of Japan showed its appreciation of Mr. Okakura's services and convictions by making him Director of their New Art School at Ueno, Tokyo. But political changes brought fresh waves of so-called Europeanism to bear on the school, and in the year 1897 it was insisted that European methods should become increasingly prominent. Mr. Okakura now resigned. Six months later 39 of the strongest young artists in Japan had grouped themselves about him, and they had opened the Nippon Bijitsuin, or Hall of Fine Arts, at Yanaka, in the suburbs of Tokyo, to which reference is made in Chapter XIV of this book.

If we say that Mr. Okakura is in some sense the William Morris of his country, we may also be permitted to explain that the Nippon Bijitsuin is a sort of Japanese Merton Abbey. Here various decorative arts, such as lacquer and metal work, bronze casting, and porcelain, are carried on, besides

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\* By Kakasu Okakura, John Murray, London.

Japanese painting and sculpture. The members attempt to possess themselves of a deep sympathy and understanding of all that is best in the contemporary art movements of the West, at the same time that they aim at conserving and extending their national inspiration. They hold proudly that their work will compare favourably with any in the world. And their names include those of Hashimoto Gaho, Kanzan, Taikan, Sessei, Kozn, and others equally famous. Besides the work of the Nippon Bijitsuin, however, Mr. Okakura has found time to aid his Government in classifying the art treasures of Japan, and to visit and study the antiquities of China and India. With regard to the latter country, this is the first instance in modern times of the arrival of a traveller possessed of exhaustive Oriental culture, and Mr. Okakura's visit to the caves of Ajanta marks a distinct era in Indian archaeology. His acquaintance with the art of the same period in Southern China enabled him to see at once that the stone figures now remaining in the caves had been intended originally merely as the bone or foundation of the statues, all the life and movement of the portrayal having been left to be worked into a deep layer of plaster with which they were afterwards covered. A closer inspection of the carvings gives ample justification of this view, though ignorance, "the unconscious vandalism of mercenary Europe" has led to an unfortunate amount of "cleaning" and unintentional disfigurement, as was the case with our own English parish churches only too recently.

Art can only be developed by nations that are in a state of freedom. It is at once indeed the great means and fruitage of that gladness of liberty which we call the sense of nationality. It is not, therefore, very surprising that India, divorced from spontaneity by a thousand years of oppression, should have lost her place in the world of the joy and the beauty of labour. But it is very reassuring to be told by a competent authority that here also once, as in religion during the era of Ashoka, she evidently led the whole East, impressing her thought and taste upon the innumerable Chinese pilgrims

who visited her universities and cave-temples, and by that means influencing the development of sculpture, painting, and architecture in China itself, and through China in Japan.

Only those who are already deep in the problems peculiar to Indian archaeology, however, will realise the striking value of Mr. Okakura's suggestions regarding the alleged influence of the Greeks on Indian sculpture. Representing, as he does, the great alternative art-lineage of the world—namely, the Chinese—Mr. Okakura is able to show the absurdity of the Hellenic theory. He points out that the actual affinities of the Indian development are largely Chinese, but that the reason of this is probably to be sought in the existence of a common early Asiatic art, which has left its uppermost ripple-marks alike on the shores of Hellas, the extreme west of Ireland, Etruria, Phoenicia, Egypt, India and China. In such a theory, a fitting truce is called to all degrading disputes about priority, and Greece falls into her proper place, as but a province of that ancient Asia to which scholars have long been looking as the Asgard background of the great Norse sagas. At the same time, a new world is opened to future scholarship, in which a more synthetic method and outlook may correct many of the errors of the past.

With regard to China, Mr. Okakura's treatment is equally rich in suggestions. His analysis of the Northern and Southern thought has already attracted considerable attention amongst the scholars of that country, and his distinction between Laoism and Taoism stands widely accepted. But it is in its larger aspects that his work is most valuable. For he holds that the great historic spectacle with which the world is necessarily familiar, of Buddhism pouring into China across the passes of the Himalayas, and by the sea-route through the straits—that movement which probably commenced under Ashoka and became tangible in China itself at the time of Nagarjuna in the second century A.D.—was no isolated event. Rather was it representative of those conditions under which alone can Asia live and flourish. The



thing we call Buddhism cannot in itself have been a defined and formulated creed, with strict boundaries and clearly demarcated heresies, capable of giving birth to a Holy Office of its own. Rather must we regard it as the name given to the vast synthesis known as Hinduism, when received by a foreign consciousness. For Mr. Okakura, in dealing with the subject of Japanese art in the 19th century, makes it abundantly clear that the whole mythology of the East, and not merely the personal doctrine of the Buddha, was the subject of interchange. Not the Buddhaising, but the *Indianising* of the Mongolian mind, was the process actually at work—much as if Christianity should receive in some strange land the name of Franciscanism, from its first missionaries.

It is well known that in the case of Japan the vital element in her national activity lies always in her art. Here we find, at each period, the indication and memorial of those constituents of her consciousness which are really essential. It is an art, unlike that of ancient Greece, in which the whole nation participates; even as in India, the whole nation combines to elaborate the thought. The question, therefore, becomes profoundly interesting: what is that thing, as a whole, which expresses itself through Japanese art as a whole?

Mr. Okakura answers without hesitation: It is the culture of Continental Asia that converges upon Japan, and finds free living expression in her art. And this Asiatic culture is broadly divisible, as he holds, into Chinese learning and Indian religion. To him, it is not the ornamental and industrial features of his country's art which really form its characteristic elements, but that great life of the ideal by which it is hardly known as yet in Europe. Not a few drawings of plum blossoms, but the mighty conception of the Dragon; not birds and flowers, but the worship of Death; not a trifling realism, however beautiful, but a grand interpretation of the grandest theme within the reach of the human mind,—the longing desire of Buddhahood to save others and not itself—these are the true burden of Japanese art. The means and method of this expression Japan has ever



owed to China; it is Mr. Okakura's contention, however, that for the ideals themselves she has depended upon India. It is his belief that her great epochs of expression have always followed in the wake of waves of Indian spirituality. Thus, bereft of the stimulating influence of the great southern peninsula, the superb art-instincts of China and Japan must have been lowered in vigour and impoverished in scope, even as those of Northern and Western Europe would undoubtedly have been, if divorced from Italy and the message of the Church. "Bourgeois" our author holds that Asiatic art could never have been, standing in sharp contrast in this respect to that of Germany, Holland, and Norway amongst ourselves. But he would admit, we may presume, that it might have remained at the level of a great and beautiful scheme of peasant decoration.

Exactly how these waves of Indian spirituality have worked to inspire nations, it has been his object throughout the following pages to show us. First understanding the conditions upon which they had to work, the race of Yamato in Japan, the wonderful ethical genius of Northern China, and the rich imaginativeness of the south, we watch the entrance of the stream of Buddhism, as it proceeds to overflow and unite the whole. We follow it here, as the first touch of the dream of a universal faith gives rise to cosmic conceptions in science, and the Roshana Buddha in art. We watch it again as it boils up into the intense pantheism of the Heian period, the emotionalism of the Fujiwara, the heroic manliness of the Kamakura.

It has been by a recrudescence of Shintoism, the primitive religion of Yamato, largely shorn of Buddhistic elements, that the greatness of the Meiji period seems to have been accomplished. But such greatness may leave inspiration far behind. All lovers of the East stand dismayed at this moment before the disintegration of taste and ideals which is coming about in consequence of competition with the West.

Therefore it is worth while to make some effort to recall Asiatic peoples to the pursuit of those proper ends which

have constituted their greatness in the past, and are capable of bringing about its restitution. Therefore is it of supreme value to show Asia, as Mr. Okakura does, not as the congeries of geographical fragments that we imagined, but as a united living organism, each part dependent on all the others, the whole breathing a single complex life.

Aptly enough, within the last ten years, by the genius of a wandering monk—the Swami Vivekananda—who found his way to America and made his voice heard in the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, Orthodox Hinduism has again become aggressive, as in the Ashokan period. For six or seven years past, it has been sending its missionaries into Europe and America, providing for the future a religious generalisation in which the intellectual freedom of the Protestantism culminating in natural science—can be combined with the spiritual and devotional wealth of Catholicism. It would almost seem as if it were the destiny of Imperial peoples to be conquered in turn by the religious ideas of their subjects. “As the creed of the down-trodden Jew has held half the earth during eighteen centuries, so,” to quote the great Indian thinker just mentioned, “it seems not unlikely that that of the despised Hindu may yet dominate the world.” In some such event is the hope of Northern Asia. The process that took a thousand years at the beginning of our era may now, with the aid of steam and electricity, repeat itself in a few decades and the world may again witness the Indianising of the East.

If so, one of many consequences will be that we shall see in Japanese art a recrudescence of ideals parallel to that of the Mediæval Revival of the past century in England. What would be the simultaneous developments in China? In India? For whatever influences the Eastern Island Empire must influence the others. Our author has talked in vain if he has not conclusively proved that contention with which this little handbook opens, that Asia, the Great Mother, is for ever One.

## MEDIAEVAL SINHALESE ART\*

The beauty of print and paper in this book is only the beginning of its merits. In these respects *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* is all that a book ought to be. Printed on the hand-press formerly used by William Morris for the Kelmscott books, and issued from the beautiful home of its author, in the heart of the English country, those who handle it will hasten to believe that things bear upon them the associations of their origin, and that that which is of auspicious birth is auspicious also in its influence.

The English of the book, moreover, is that of one saturated with the strong simple terms of Gospels and Sagas. As in the printing, so also in the language, one feels the touch of Morris, master-craftsman of the modern world. Regarded as a contribution to literature, the great difficulty of *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* is found in the large number of technical terms with which it is strewn. It will be seen, however, on examination, that these terms are never allowed to interfere with the flow of composition, and that immense pains have been taken to render them with their exact English equivalents. The use of foreign technical terms in a book of this particular character is of course inevitable. The utmost that can be done is to explain them, without a break of phonetic continuity.

The matter is however more important than a single glance can show. Dr. Coomaraswamy has gone far afield to find true equivalents in English for the feeling as well as the literal significance of Sinhalese terms, and such a translation as *Lych gate*, or *Yeomen* or *Swing of doom* deserves high praise. Nothing has been more productive of confusion of mind and heart between East and West than the stupidity of carrying over words like *ryot*, *Zemindar*, and *Brahman* in

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\* By Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

the block, as if they had no Western analogy and were therefore untranslatable.

The aim of Dr. Coomaraswamy's work is to display the arts and crafts of an Eastern Mediaeval kingdom, in full working order, showing both by detail and interrelations, how these have been dependent on the central civilisation of India for constant inspiration and sustenance, and yet thoroughly original and spontaneous in development and character.

"It will thus be seen," he says, "how intimately connected was the art of Southern India and Ceylon; but while thus recognising the influence of the Tamil Craftsmen, it is necessary to remember also the continuity and vitality of the indigenous tradition, and to give to the Sinhalese people the full credit for the fact that their art, taken as a whole, is perfectly distinct in style and feeling from that of Southern India, and preserves clearer and more numerous traces of the Early Indian, and especially of the Early Buddhist style, than can easily be found in India itself".

And again we see India as the mother of a whole circle of art-syntheses:—

"There is remarkable unity underlying the diverse developments of Indian art (including the art of Ceylon, Burma, Siam, and Java), not merely as regards the persistence in time of elements of decoration, but also geographically; here I refer to the present peculiar isolation of particular trades and techniques which survive, so to say, in scattered 'islands' all over India. The argument from distribution is, that a knowledge of these crafts was once more widely spread and continuous; it is also fairly clear that it was once very much more extensive and thorough."

A *propos* of this continuity of art in India, those of Dr. Coomaraswamy's readers who have travelled in the Punjab, or in the Himalayas will be startled and delighted to find prominent mention made in this account of Ceylon of Bhumi Devi, that Goddess of the Homestead whose



worship is so familiar in the North. The unity of India is indeed manifold in its expression.

The author does not hold that Sinhalese art is anything more than decorative. He says:—

“This book is a record of the work and the life of the craftsman in a feudal society not unlike that of Early Mediaeval Europe. It deals, not with a period of great attainment in fine art, but with a beautiful and dignified scheme of peasant decoration, based upon the traditions of Indian art and craft. Sinhalese art is essentially Indian, but possesses this special interest, that it is in many ways of an earlier character, and more truly Hindu—though Buddhist in intention—than any Indian art surviving on the mainland so late as the beginning of the nineteenth century. The minor arts, and the painting, are such as we might expect to have been associated with the culture of Ashoka's time, and the builders of Barahat.”

Dr. Coomaraswamy rises to sustained eloquence on this particular subject, of the rank to be accorded to Sinhalese art, and the class of art to which it belongs.

“The most essential character of Kandyan painting, as of Kandyan design in general, is its *idealism*. This idealism belongs to all Indian art; but in Kandyan art it appears in almost an extreme form. Some of the *Magul lakunu*, for example, are little more than hieroglyphics. But the idealism is very marked also in design and picture. Observe, for example, the trees in Kandyan drawings; these are not portraits of particular trees, but abstractions, representing the artist's generalised conception of all such trees. When I say ‘the artist’, I do not refer to any individual but imply the whole body of artists who together worked out the language long ago; and I say language, because traditions and conventions are to the artist what words and metre are to the poet, and these no one man made. The idealism of Kandyan art is part of its inheritance from India; but as we have already observed, Kandyan art does not represent Indian art at its greatest or even at a very great period, but



rather Indian art at the level of a great and beautiful scheme of peasant decoration. Kandyan art as we see it represents a tradition handed down from the earliest stratum of Indian art, modified and enriched by subsequent influences, but in many ways primitive; just as the original manner of building in wood, and of making images in impermanent materials, survives in spite of the work in stone of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Could the sculptors of Barahat have come to life in eighteenth century Kandy, they would have found little that would have seemed strange or unfamiliar in the style or subject of the painting on its vihara walls. The sculptured trees at Barahat differ only from those painted at Danagirigala in their more intense feeling for beauty and the deeper emotion which inspires them. This we should expect in work so much nearer the beginning of a great tradition.

“We shall understand the idealism of Indian and Sinhalese art as well from a study of the Barahat or Kandyan trees, as in any other way. There are two ways of seeing a tree; at first glance or in a photograph, it strikes us as an irregular growth of branches and leaves, producing a confused effect of light and shade. We soon learn to distinguish more than this, and to tell one kind of tree from another. But as we consider more deeply a number of trees of different kinds, we realise that each has, as it were, a law of its being; its leaves have a certain form, with a certain range of variation, its branches a certain manner of growth, its flowers a particular symmetry. Each actual tree seems to be an incarnation or embodiment of some more perfect and rhythmical idea of the tree. This idea it is the aim of art to reveal.

“A good example of the idealistic treatment is afforded by the lotus. The lotus to Indian art and for the Indian mystic, is all that the rose was to mediaeval Europe. As English mediaeval art is one long ‘Romaunt of the Rose,’ so Indian art is a romance of the many-petalled flower that is the throne of all divinities, and whose ideal form continually

reincarnates in every vessel and in every design. The simple lotus form represents the ideal form of all lotuses, as does the Tudor rose for all roses; it carries the emotion of all lotuses compressed into one abstraction. This is the secret of the constancy of art forms, that the ideal form they represent is eternal and immutable, a thought in the heart of Isvara; that is why the trees at Barahat and the trees in a Kandyan vihara are expressed by the same formula. The impulse to the expression of emotion in art, is born of the sense of the unity of all life, the recognition of the many in the one. The representation of ideal forms, the reduction of various complex appearances to their simplest terms, is an expression of the desire to see the one in the many. There is here a great affinity between art and science; what natural law resuming the sequence of phenomena is for phenomena, ideal art is for the expression of emotion. Scientific drawing is concerned with the appearance of things as they seem to be in themselves; art with things as they really are within ourselves; in other words, science is objective, art subjective. It is most important that their aims should not, as is now usually the case, be confused.”

In this beautiful passage, we catch a glimpse of the law that dominates and determines almost all the culminating art-epochs of the world. Great art-epochs are great religious epochs, those historic moments at which the soul of man is most deeply smitten by the glory of ideals. In accordance with this truth is the absolute agreement between Indian thought and Indian art. Dr. Coomaraswamy sounds in nothing a stronger note than here, in his demonstration of the fact that art, like science, like religion, has her eyes upon the unseen that transcends the seen; that the very crafts and industries of India are inspired and guided by the conviction that mind alone is, and matter but appears.

This book is a veritable quarry of material, in all the crafts. Details are given, for instance, about dyeing and smithing, wood-work and metal work, which ought to be of the greatest immediate value to all who attempt such

arts, whether from the professional or dilettante point of view.

But, like a true son of Indian scholarship, which has never neglected humanity for wealth, Dr. Coomaraswamy does not forget the social background of the crafts. His studies of the craft castes are constant. And the main significance of caste-honour, the stability of national wealth, as embodied in the food-supply, is well suggested in the following passages :

"It cannot be too well realised that the Sinhalese Society was a community based on rice. Land was not the luxury of a few, but the daily occupation and livelihood of the majority; not to own land is still felt to be scarcely respectable. Every man from the king down had an immediate interest in the cultivation of the land; almost every man cultivated the soil with his own hands."

"Great chiefs were not ashamed to hold the plough in their own hands, and it was thought becoming for the young men to reap at least a part of the harvest every year; for which damascened and ivory-handled sickles were sometimes used. The great majority of men, and amongst the village folk, of women also, were continually brought into close touch with the soil and each other by working together in the fields; even the craftsmen did not as a body rely upon their craft as a direct means of livelihood, and used themselves to lay aside their tools to do a share of field work when need was, as at sowing or harvest time."

Following out the study of village organisation thus begun, the author concludes with the profound observation,

"It will be seen that, as in India, beneath the outward form of despotic rule lay the democratic and communistic organisation of the villages."

The characteristic bias of an Indian scholar—so necessary in matters which concern India, as opposed to the pessimistic prepossessions of current criticism is shown in the cheerful construction put upon contemporary facts. "The capacity for communal action," says Dr. Coomaraswamy, "is

shown in the frequent cases of combination amongst villagers, to erect and endow viharas. This proof of the possibility of united action even apart from Royal or Vice-regal patronage, is of particular promise for the future. Thus, in Themprul, the western division of the Central Province, there were but few viharas before the British accession and the majority now existing have been built by villagers since 1815, and endowed by them with small parcels of land."

The history of Sinhalese art could not be ignored, in an account like the present. For this the main question is of the elements or *motifs* discoverable in decorative design, and their assignment to appropriate historic sources. The lotus and lotus-petal, the Bo-leaf, the tree, the cobra's head, and the Hamsa, are all noticed and analysed by the author, in passages whose charm is fully equal to the indefatigable industry which they display.

There are, however, in Sinhalese design, a number of *motifs* of other than this romance-of-the-home, or Indian-idealistic origin. The island must have been one of the meeting points of Chinese, Dravidian, and Egyptian elements in pre-Buddhistic ages, before the Vikings of Bengal made their historic descent on its shores, in 543 B.C. It would therefore be natural enough if we found there a certain purity and vigour of Mediterranean forms. Dr. Coomaraswamy, however, is no victim of current nonsense about Greece. He refuses to recognise the Hellenic mind as the sole authorised fount of beauty for the early as for the modern world. He points out that the distinction of Greece herself lay not so much in originating as in developing certain forms. And he insists constantly, and we cannot but think correctly, on the common origin of Greek and Asiatic themes in design. This is a sound and valuable doctrine, and is bound to be exceedingly fruitful of research and discovery in the future.

But a certain number of Assyrian, Greek and Egyptian affinities are undoubtedly traceable in Sinhalese design, showing that Ceylon, like Ireland, was on one of the main



lines of a very early culture-network, created possibly by the civilisation of yellow races. Besides these, again, Dr. Coomaraswamy distinguishes those 'barbaric' *motifs* which recur spontaneously, in the design of children, and primitive men, in all races, and all ages.

Summing up the more serious aspects of the historical question, we have the following *apologia*:—

"When I first met with types of ornament, forcibly recalling early Mediterranean forms, I assumed the common view as to the extent, permanence, and importance of the influence of Greek on Indian Art, and endeavoured to explain the presence of these decorative forms in Ceylon on those lines. At that time I accepted such statements as those of Grunwedel that the ideal type of Buddha was created for India by foreigners . . . . I have since seen reason to doubt the somewhat simple solutions of difficulties thus provided, and to believe that the influence of Greek on Indian Art, however extensive at a certain period, was ultimately neither very profound nor very important. It is the concentration of attention upon the effeminate and artistically unimportant work of the Gandhara School that has given undue prominence to the Greek influence. It must be admitted also that a certain prejudice has led European investigators to think of classic Greece naturally as the source of all Art, and to suppose that the influence of classic Art must have been as permanently important in the East as in the West. At the same time, it is to be remembered that it is not generally realised by Western scholars, who are not always artists, that Eastern Art, whether Indian or Chinese, has a value and significance not less than that of the Western Art of any time."

The reviewer of a work like this, is always confronted by the impossibility of more than hinting at the wealth to be found in it. A classic has been written, and written from the Eastern standpoint by one fully competent to have dealt with a Western subject of the same kind, with equal authority. All who know the writer will look with eagerness for further



works from his pen. But what of the continuation of such study by Indian scholars? The field of research is unlimited. Every Indian province, every mediaeval city, abounds in industries, in traditions, in codes, in craft-lore fit to be immortalised and good to immortalise and thereby wing for future influence, through the printed word. Where are the men who will come forward, to assert and classify the riches of their Homeland, in such a fashion?

It is by means like these that an unassailable background of knowledge and culture may be added to the sentiment of *Swadesh*, and the doctrine of Nationality. India is full of jewels: all that is needed is men to pick them up! Laborious collection from outside is almost worthless. The passion of the lover, the insight of the poet, the tenderness of the home-child, are as necessary as the training of eye and brain and hand in such a task. Then, and then alone, shall we have a witness to the Indian national unity that no one, for any motive whatsoever, shall be able to withstand. *Bhumia Devi Ki Jai!* Glory to the Mother, Goddess of the Homestead!

## THE EXHIBITION OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF ORIENTAL ART

In the interesting Exhibition of Indian art new and old, which was held by this Society at the Government School of Art, Calcutta, during the month of February, the imaginative character of old Indian art was well vindicated. It is not until a large collection of the best specimens has been brought together that we are in a position to form any opinion at all regarding the general character of the last five centuries of our art. Its charm of colouring is of course universally admitted. But we have become so accustomed to those traditional treatments of sacred symbols which are habitual with the image-makers, that we fail to realise what was the freedom of the artists. For it goes without saying that religious subjects furnished their principal themes to Hindu painters, whether of the Kangra Valley, Benares, Delhi, or Lucknow. The secular art of the Moguls and of the minor courts, bulks comparatively small, beside their constant illustration of the sacred texts and of theological ideas. Secular painting, moreover, has the air of a side-issue, a branch of the great tree of expression, whose main root is in the idea of the divine.

In the rooms of the Exhibition, we found that this old national art, in spite of the difference of scale, was to the full as imaginative, in the high creative sense, as anything in Europe. Here was a picture of Krishna and Balarama entering Mathura, as two cowherds. The tints were most delicate, the walls and gates those of a Mogul or Rajput city; the lads themselves were simply but pleasingly dressed, in peasant costumes, with hair cut in rustic fashion; and by their side, to the front of the picture, marched the cows, in serried ranks, apparently done with pencil on the white ground. The whole conception was so beautiful, and withal so original, that it cannot be forgotten. Elsewhere, we find

Uma, fasting, met suddenly by the Brahmin who is Shiva himself or a picture of Kailas, and so on and so forth. In each case it is quite evident that the artist has felt the traditional symbolism as no fetter, but a great liberty of expression. He has searched the common life for those beautiful glimpses which are the true commentary on all the texts, gospels and sagas alike. And he has aimed at full expression of the beauty thus freely seen. A picture of a king carried on a litter through the palace by women blazed on the wall opposite the entrance door, and may well be considered as, decoratively speaking, one of the best fruits of a great school. The costumes of the women formed a patch of brilliant colour, and against them the low wall and floor of the court were all in white marble, while beyond, in a slightly browner tint, showed the river, outside the walls. Had the feeling of this picture been nobler it would have ranked as a great masterpiece, but the sight of a man smoking a hookah while he is carried by women, is unredeemable, and we can praise only its decorative quality. Yet the quality of contrasting white against white, in the fashion of J. P. Gangooly's pictures of the River Padma, is very memorable, and we are glad to find it with historic precedent.

Prepared thus, by our rapid *résumé* of the old Indian art, the modern room, with its works of a dozen or so of young painters, could be seen in its true light, as a natural outcome and development of the old. Mahashveta playing on the Vina, or the woman lighting the evening lamp beneath the tree (Venkata Appa) on the left, as we entered, and Priyanath Sinha's Chaitanya on the right, seemed only part and parcel of the national art. We forgot the long period that had elapsed between the one group and the other, and the long and painful search for the right end of the thread that had been lost. It had been found again, that was all we knew, as we went from one group to another, of the pictures of the new School. The Society had done its best to make a memorial collection, for the late Surendra Nath Gangooly, and fifteen or sixteen of his works hung on the wall, to the

left of the Nanda Lal Bose collection. Of them all, his Flight of Lakshman Sen was the masterpiece, but in the Chariot of Nahusha, Kartikeya, and the Throne of Vikram, we found the same feeling for strong and historic treatment that distinguishes that work. The writing of the Mahabharata, the Chakra of King Ambarisha, and the Damaru, were also remarkable, each in its own way. How terrible is the loss that Bengal has suffered, in the premature death of this artist, in the very bloom of his genius!

The works of Nanda Lal Bose need no introduction to his countrymen, who are justly proud of each new achievement. His latest works —‘Agni’ and ‘Ahalya’— were seen at this exhibition, along with specimens of each of the painter’s many styles, and the conviction of his great technical power grew on us with every step. What we look for in this artist is the growth of a vaster, more masculine, and more synthetic treatment. His pictures of Bhishma’s Vow and the Swayamvara of Damayanti are efforts in this direction, but they fail to incorporate the surpassing charm of his smaller works. We want all these qualities at once, in some great master-piece!

The paintings of U. C. Gangooly are subject to the serious criticism that not one of them can be seen, in any natural position. This is a result of the grave sin of making intellectual cleverness the ideal, to the detriment of colour. We would advise this artist to work for a whole year, thinking of nothing but his colour schemes. After such self-discipline he would find his creative powers modified in a very wonderful manner, for which he would never cease to give us thanks! Asit Kumar Haldar’s ‘Sita’ seemed to us the most successful attempt yet made, at that subject. Sita ought, undoubtedly, to have a pre-eminence in Indian art, like that of the Madonna in European. The very exaltation of their feeling for her, seems, however, to deter our Bengalee artists from attempting her portraiture with the self-confidence necessary to success. Haldar’s ‘Moazzim’ again, as a colour study was most beautiful. The white light of the dawn on clothes and marble dome were lovely in the extreme, but



alas, the moazzim was over-dressed and posing for his picture! The feeling of calling a sleeping world to prayer, the music of the words 'to pray is better than to sleep!'—had not been rendered.

Some of the paintings of Ishwari Prasad deserved special attention, for the fact that they were made by means of genuine old Indian colours. It is obvious that India will have a tremendous advantage in art over modern countries, if only she can restore the manufacture and use of the old paints. Here was half the secret of her unrivalled colour-mastery in the past, some of the reds in the picture of Krishna and Yashoda lent by Sir Lawrence Jenkins, gave us a limit of the beauty of these old colours. For purity, brilliance, and durability, they are like nothing modern. We sincerely trust that in this part of its activities the society will go fast and go far.

The works of Hakim M. Khan deserve a word to themselves. The 'Durbar of Mahommed Shah' was remarkable—not for that intense mentality characteristic of some of the Hindu artists, but—for its harmonious and easy treatment of a complex subject. The marble audience-hall, with its grouping of persons and colours, was delightful and full of life and ease. A portrait of the artist's father, from memory, was an excellent revival of the Mogul style of portraiture. A single moment of stillness, and the man as he was.

These were some of the paintings for which the recent exhibition will be long memorable. 'Old Favourites' by Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, and the wonderful impressionist sketches of his brother, Gaganendra Nath, were placed on the walls, as a sort of background and filling, for the works of students and disciples. And for ourselves, we came away much gladdened, for never had the continuity of the new school with the old, been so convincingly demonstrated, and we felt, in that fact, many miles nearer to our dream—the great Indian school of mural painting, historic, national and heroic, which is to be the gift of the future to the chosen Land.







Bharatmata  
by Abanindranath Tagore

## ART APPRECIATIONS

ABANINDRA NATH TAGORE

### *Bharat-Matā*

We have here a picture which bids fair to prove the beginning of a new age in Indian art. Using all the added means of expression which the modern period has bestowed upon him, the artist has here given expression nevertheless to a purely Indian idea, in Indian form. The curving line of lotuses and the white radiance of the halo are beautiful additions to the Asiatically-conceived figure with its four arms, as the symbol of the divine multiplication of power. This is the first masterpiece, in which an Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging, as it were, the spirit of the motherland,—giver of Faith and Learning, of Clothing and Food,—and portraying Her, as she appears to the eyes of Her children. What he sees in Her is here made clear to all of us. Spirit of the motherland, giver of all good, yet eternally virgin, eternally raft from human sense in prayer and gift. The misty lotuses and the white light set Her apart from the common world, as much as the four arms, and Her infinite love. And yet in every detail, of “Shankha” bracelet, and close-veiling garment, of bare feet, and open, sincere expression, is she not after all, our very own, heart of our heart, at once mother and daughter of the Indian land, even as to the Rishis of old was Ushabala, in her Indian girlhood, daughter of the dawn?

### *India the Mother*

It is not always those events which are most loudly talked of that are really most important, and I for one have no hesitation in ranking far above most things that have happened during the past month, the appearance of Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore's picture of ‘The Spirit of the Motherland,’

published in *Bhandar* for June. We see in this drawing something for which Indian art has long been waiting, the birth of the idea of those new combinations which are to mark the modern age in India. If nationality, and the civic ideal, and every form of free and vigorous co-operation for mutual service and mutual aid, are indeed to be the distinguishing marks of the new era, then it is clear that we must have definite symbols under which to think of them, and with the creation and establishment of such symbols Indian art will be occupied, for these many decades, or even it may be, for centuries to come.

I have long thought that if I were an Indian prince I would use my surplus revenues first and foremost for the promotion of civic and historic painting. To this end I would open competitions and announce prizes, and establish picture-printing presses for cheap reproduction of coloured pictures. Here in our dusty lanes, I would like to build open verandahs, running round three sides of a square, and bearing on their inner surfaces great mural pictures—some in pigments, some in mosaics, and some after the fashion of the Indian past, carved in stone in low relief—of the mighty scenes of the civic and national past. We have such things already in Indian temples. I have seen at Conjeeveram a long frieze of Ramayana-subjects, and elsewhere glimpses from the Mahabharata and Puranas. But the buildings of which I speak should be civic temples, or temples may be of the national spirit. There, no mythic scenes should be allowed. Instead—Ashoka sending forth his missionaries; Kanishka seated in council; Vikramaditya offering the Ashvamedha; the twelve crowned victims of Chetore—the Coronation of Akbar; the building of the Taj; the funeral of Aurangzeb; the sati of the Queen Jahnabi of hill Tipperah—these, and such as these, should be the subjects here displayed, and every woman on her way to the river-ghat, and every labourer going to and from his work, should be made familiar with the idea of India, and the evolution of India through four thousand years.



In visiting the English House of Parliament, as all the world is free to do, in London on Saturday mornings, nothing is so startlingly impressive and memorable as the array of mural pictures in the two lobbies, and the selection of subjects, sounding the different notes of aristocratic and democratic pride in the history of England, according as we find ourselves on the threshold of the Lords or the Commons. Similarly, in the Manchester Town Hall the walls are covered with the painted story of early Manchester and mediaeval Manchester, and the spectator is likely to feel that there is little fair in human life or human hope that is not indicated there. But the difficulty in both these cases is the same. These frescoes are inside buildings, and their enjoyment is necessarily confined, therefore, to those who are more or less wealthy and already educated. In the beautiful Indian climate, however, there is no necessity for such shutting up of the means of education. Wide overhanging eaves to protect pictures and visitors from rain and direct sun-light, and no more is necessary. The lane itself is become a University, and the picture is more than a Thakoor, it is a school, a library, an epic poem. Necessarily the man who would initiate such a fashion must be born a prince. But in modern times cheap colour-printing offers an easily available substitute for mural painting. In remote farm-houses and in bazaar verandahs alike, one comes upon these pictures of the gods and goddesses, made for the most part in Germany and sadly inaccurate. It is here, in the preparation of Swadeshi substitutes for these posters, as we might perhaps call them, that the present generation of art-students might do admirable work. And certainly first and foremost of the series I would place this wonderful Bharat-Mata of Mr. Tagore. In this picture—which would need to be enlarged and printed, for the purpose of which I speak, in two or three bright but delicate colours—we have a combination of perfect refinement with great creative imagination. Bharat-Mata stands on the green earth. Behind her is the blue sky. Beneath the exquisite little feet is a curved line of four misty white lotuses. She has the



four arms that always, to Indian thinking, indicate the divine power. Her sari is severe, even to puritanism, in its enfolding lines. And behind the noble sincerity of eyes and brow we are awed by the presence of the broad white halo. Shiksha-Diksha-Anna-Bastra the four gifts of the Motherland to her children, she offers in her four hands.

From beginning to end the picture is an appeal, in the Indian language, to the Indian heart. It is the first great masterpiece in a new style. I would reprint it, if I could, by tens of thousands, and scatter it broadcast over the land, till there was not a peasant's cottage, or a craftman's hut, between Kedar Nath and Cape Comorin, that had not this presentment of Bharat-Mata somewhere on its walls. Over and over again, as one looks into its qualities, one is struck by the purity and delicacy of the personality portrayed. It is a wonderful thing surely, that this should be the quality that speaks loudest in the first picture of India, the Mother, that an Indian man makes for his people!

This is not the first fine thing that its creator has done. But for my own part every former achievement of his appears to rank besides this as the construction of written characters ranks besides the first poem inscribed. Up to this time, Mr. Tagore has been mastering his language, creating his style. Now, he has begun to write poems. May he never cease! And may there follow thousands after him to write more, in the language that he by his unaided efforts has created for them, and will teach to them.

### *Sita*

The outstanding impression made by this picture is one of extraordinary mental intensity. The face is not perhaps chosen from amongst the most beautiful Indian types. The brow retreats, and the neck is thick,—features not usually characteristic of a Hindu woman. On the other hand, Mr. Tagore is strongly to be congratulated on the *strength* of his portrayal. It cannot be said too often that Sita, as depicted in the Ramayana, is first a great woman, and only afterwards

a great wife. In this picture, with its noble proportions and splendid vigour, we see that Sita who could laugh at hardships, and burn with her disdain Ravana himself, we catch a glimpse even of the woman of the last great scene of wounded withdrawal, before the popular insult.

Mr. Tagore has wisely chosen his own setting for the captive Sita. He has placed her behind bars, looking out, in the infinite longing of the dawn, over the water of Ocean. This visualises her imprisonment and sadness, as the garden of Ashoka trees, on the banks of the river, could never have done. It is impossible, in the photograph, to catch the extraordinary beauty of the sunrise sky, as it is given in the original. But the ideal lives for us at last. The Indian Madonna has found a form. In ages to come, each great painter may create his own particular presentment of Sita, even as in Europe we can tell, from something in the manner of the picture, whether a Holy Family is by Raphael or Leonardo da Vinci, by Correggio or Botticelli. But at least nothing can ever again be accepted, which is not psychologically Sita. In the strong and noble womanhood, in the regal pride brought low, and the hoping yet despairful wifeness, of this Sita, by Mr. Tagore, we have achieved something too deeply satisfying for us again to be contented without an effort in its direction.

### *Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj*

The last reflection of the sunset has not yet died out of the eastern sky. The young moon is high behind the clouds. And the Emperor rides alone by the river-side to pray. Weeks, perhaps months, have gone by, since that terrible moment of severance, when the two who were as one, were divided for a time. The heart still quivers, under the freshness of the wound; and yet serenity is at its dawn; within the soul we behold the meeting-place of pain and peace. Yonder, on the far side of the river, lies a grave, *her* grave. O flowing stream! O little tomb! How icy-cold tonight, is this tent of the heart! Awhile hence, when the moon is gone, and all the

world is wrapped in secrecy, Shah Jahan will ride across the ford, and there dismount, to kneel beneath the marble canopy, and kiss, with passionate kisses, those cold stones, that silent earth, that are as the hem of her garment to him who loves. Awhile hence, despair and longing will have overwhelmed him. But now, he prays. With all the gravity and stateliness of a Mohammedan sovereign, he paces up and down on horseback, head bowed, hands quiet on the reins, and lost in thought. The healing hand of his own strong religious faith has begun to make itself felt, in the man's life. The gleam of white marble speaks to him of rest. A throne could not lift her who is gone, as she is lifted in this shrine of death. How far has she been removed, above all the weariness and pain, the turbulence and mischance, of this mortal world! The soul that came to him out of the infinite, like a great white bird, bearing love and compassion on its wings is withdrawn once more into the bosom of God. The presence of this dust is in truth a consecration. The lamp of the home is extinguished, but burns there not a light the more, before the altar? The wife, the mother, the queen, is gone, but in heaven there kneels a saint before God, praying to Him for her beloved on earth.

Was it in hours like these, that the dream of the Taj was born?

This picture, by Abanindra Nath Tagore, is based on the following story :

"When Shah Jahan went to the war in the Deccan, he took his Queen Taj Bibi with him. At Zainabad she died, in child birth. There, in a beautiful garden, on the far side of the river, she was first buried. On this side, the battle-field; on that, in its garden, the little tomb of Taj Bibi. On Fridays, Shah Jahan would cross the river alone, to pray."

Its beauty will appeal to all. The intense quiet of the subject demands night-treatment, and the little tomb of Taj Bibi, focussing the light of the veiled moon upon itself, is wonderfully eloquent of its spiritual place in the Emperor's life. The drawing is full of strength. But we do wish that

we might again enjoy colour at the hands of Mr. Tagore! We long for some of those bright and tender interpretations which were once so characteristic of the art of this land of bright skies and limpid atmospheres, those interpretations in which Mr. Tagore himself is so well fitted to excel!

### *The Passing of Shah Jahan*

It was said of Abanindra Nath Tagore the other day, by one whose name is likely to be much heard in the future, as that of a great Indian art-critic, that "not only is he what could not have been expected in India at present, but also probably of first rank in Europe". And Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's praise is understood by even the most unlearned who sees the superb original of the drawing reproduced in this number, "The Passing of Shah Jahan".

It happens to a few lives that they are filled with a certain quality of dramatic fitness. They appear to reap the harvest of many births. The jewel and its setting have, in every case that concerns them, a strange harmony. Pre-eminently was this the case with Shah Jahan. The turbulent young soldier becomes the Emperor of Delhi, and nothing is wanting to the glory of his reign. Successful general, unrivalled administrator, wealthiest of monarchs, he does not fail, either, of more subtle and finer joys more often granted to men of lower station. Shah Jahan, Emperor of all India, is also hero nevertheless of one of the supreme marriage-idylls of the world. All that he can give, has not prevented a woman from yielding to him her disinterested devotion. And as if even this were too little, there is given to him the still rarer gift of immortal song in honour of the beloved. For are the buildings and cities that his genius has left,—dedicated to Arzmand Banu, his wife, and to India, Goddess and Mother,—not a poem sung in marble by the lips of a sovereign? Never verily in the history of the world, did any single monarch build like this. And never one who was not enamoured and enrapt of a passion for the land he ruled.



Yet that the great life may indeed be perfect, we have no monotony of splendour and success. The sad minor mingles with the music. To joyous courtship succeeds long widowhood. On brilliant empire supervenes the seven-years' imprisonment. He, before whom the whole world bowed, is thankful and proud to win at last the long sweet faith and service of a single daughter of his own. From the throne of the world to a prison-cell! What were the memories and what the hopes, that thronged the shadows in which Shah Jahan spent those last long years?

Here is the end.

At his own earnest entreaty as they tell to this day in Agra Fort, the bed of the dying man has been carried to the balcony beyond the Jasmine Tower, that overhangs the river. Jahanara weeps at her father's feet. All others have withdrawn, for no service remains to be rendered to the august captive. On the edge of the carpet lie only the shoes and regal helmet, put off for the last time. For Shah Jahan, the uses of the world are ended. Silence and night and the mourning moon, half-veiled in her scarf of drifting cloud, envelop the sad soul of the gentle princess.

But Shah Jahan himself? To him the moment is glad with expectation. The sucking sound of the river below the bastions fills him with the sense of that other river beside which stands his soul. Yonder, beyond the bend, like some ethereal white-veiled presence, stands the Taj,—*her* taj, her crown, the crown he wrought for her. But tonight it is more than her crown. Tonight, it is herself. Tonight she is there, in all her old-time majesty and sweetness, yet with an added holiness withal. Tonight, beyond the gentle lapping of the waters, every line of the stately form speaks tenderness and peace and all-enfolding holiness, waiting for that pilgrim—with weary feet, bent back, and head so bowed, alas!—who comes, leaving behind alike palace and prison, battlefield and cell of prayer, to land on the quiet shore on the yonder side of death.



Truly a royal passing—this of Shah Jahan! King in nothing so truly as in his place in a woman's heart—crowned in this, the supreme moment, of her to whom he gave the Crown of all the world.

NANDA LAL BOSE

*Sati*

Had the painter of this picture been a European, we should unquestionably have had the subject presented to us as a fine-looking woman, drawn to her full height, and facing the spectators in a mingling of beauty and triumph. Nothing could be more significant of the distinctive character of Indian feeling, however, than the way in which Mr. Nanda Lal Bose has here set himself to approach the idea. We see before us a woman, beautiful indeed, and adorned like a bride, with her whole mind set on the moment of triumph, yet without the slightest consciousness of her own glory. The form is pure Sattva, without one particle of Rajas, as the Indian thinker might express it. The spire-like flames leap up. She kneels throned on a summit of fire. Yet there is no fear. No farewell sob is mingled with her praying. Her eyes see nothing—neither the flames beneath, nor the loved ones she is leaving—nothing at all, save the sacred form of him whom she is about to rejoin. Her mind is quiet, flooded with peace. The moment is one of union. She knows nothing of separation.

In this perfect fearlessness, this absence of any self-consciousness, what a witness we find to the Indian Conception of the Glory of Woman! What other lands have done in the name of the great causes,—for faith, for freedom, for the right of knowledge,—was here done, a thousand times more commonly, out of the sweet tenderness of the home. Well may the women who have done this thing be worshipped by their descendants for all time. And certain is it that in the race that has borne them, their courage and high fealty can never die, but remain hidden, not again to be used in this form truly, but to find new utterance and fresh expression in the world-shaking crises of future ages. From the cloistered wifehood of the old Indian home to the martyr death of the

Great Saint—was it not in truth a path of glory, on which each footprint should receive our salutation?

### *The Dance of Shiva*

In the world, there is but one India, and even in India, only one Shiva! The God of the bliss that lies in nothingness, God of utter-most renunciation, God of the rapture of annihilation,—the conception of Mahadeva represents as extraordinary an achievement of the human mind, in one line, as Newton's *Principia* in another. For sheer emotional profundity, for philosophical daring and for the directness of its approach to the Infinite, the whole world's poetry can offer nothing like this piece of Hindu mythology. From the lowest savage upwards—may be, from our fourfooted brethren upwards!—all have known how to worship a Creator and Preserver, a Personal Guide and Providence, a friend and father of men. But who, save the sons of our Motherland, have dared to love Him who breaks the Illusion, Him who neither asks nor bestows anything save the freedom of the soul, Him who loves only the rejected-of-the-world, Him whose intoxication of joy lies in the annihilation of all things?

It is not the Shiva of myth and legend, but this Shiva of absolute insight, of unassailable certainty, who is bodied forth as the Dancer of Destruction. Shiva as Nata-Raja, the Dancing King, is the creation of the South, where His form is the commonest of all emblems. The South seizes on the heart of philosophy, on the life-spring of theology. She gives us no static God, no remote Sannyasin, lost in meditation, but—Shankaracharya's Adwaita, and the common craftsman's Nata-Raja.

The present age has democratised and universalised every local trait and attribute. With burning thirst, we drink of the Adwaita, and appropriate, as a great genius has here done, the symbols of that faith.

'The Dance of Shiva' is Samadhi become dynamic. It is Samadhi represented as physical activity. Just so must it be,

and no otherwise. The pillars and arches of heaven are falling. The Trisul (trident) is flaming. The universe is on fire. And He the Immortal dreamer, dances,—drunken with God-consciousness, awake only to the harmony within,—dances the dance that draws the worlds into its rhythm, and makes night and day but the pulsing of its beat.

Again, as is so often the case with these Indian pictures, we are in the presence of a work so psychological, so meditative, so intense, that the faculty of criticism ceases before it, and we are swept away by the idea that seized the artist, and made to contemplate that alone.

### *Kaikeyi*

Kaikeyi is not yet determined on the course to be taken. Not yet has she gone to the Anger-chamber. The head of the hump-backed serving-woman Manthara is seen in the act of departing from her presence, like some symbol of an evil suggestion left in the mind. The youngest and most beautiful of Dasharatha's Queens sits alone, while her motherhood struggles between nobility and ambition. Almost we see the tragic issue in the face of Kaikeyi. Almost we see the moment when the happiness of husband and children will become indifferent to her, and she will put off alone, from the shores of sweetness, in the little boat of selfish greed. She who has been as a flower of delight to the King, is destined to be her husband's slayer, as surely as if she were about to sever the thread of his life with steel. In this moment of unwomanly temptation, her beauty has become masculine in its character. Power and sternness are there, and we can see in the attitude the blood of kings. But the fierce struggle has left none of that tenderness and gentleness that Dasharatha and his sons were wont to find in her. And how wonderfully the billowy curves of the Sari-border tune us for the mental conflict in the mind of the Queen! Kaikeyi is here shown to us as of that order of heroines to which belongs Lady Macbeth, but there is a refinement and sensitiveness in the Indian character, which is not shown to us in the grim

Scots wife.' Kaikeyi is more complex, more human. She is more woman and less man. Lady Macbeth's strength is such as to make her husband often play the woman. Kaikeyi's rouses in us rather the sense of pity, that she herself is turning her back on her true and higher self, to which she must one day, when the cup of disaster is full, find reconciliation. Instinctively we know that when the mind of the Western heroine catches a glimpse of the nature of her crime, she will lay hands of revenge upon herself, and complete in self-slaughter what began in the murder of guest and king. But over the soul of Kaikeyi the waters of remorse will flow in healing; they will be one with the streams of penitence. She is at this moment the tool of mysterious destiny, working through her folly, that all things may be accomplished. Not for ever is she to be left thus.

### *The Death-Bed of Dasharatha*

The simple pathos of this picture will be best appreciated by those who have seen the original. Through the open window-space, we see the night, with its stars. It is the hour of darkness, relieved only by the lamp behind the bed, suspended by what looks like a fine gold thread. Dasharatha lies dying, in the room of Kaushalya. The pain and yearning in his face, and the gesture of thought, so suggestive of listening for a returning footstep, tell their own tale. The queen has been fanning her husband,—no queen but a wife. But suddenly, overcome by the thought of her own loneliness, and Dasharatha's grief, she has thrown the fan aside, and head is bowed on her arms, in mingled sorrow and prayers. Soon the soul of the aged king will go forth amidst the open spaces of the universe, and she will be left without husband or son. Pain, Pain, Pain. But a pain that touches us the deeper because it is so wonderfully restrained in expression. We know that henceforth for Kaushalya the night-winds will moan of this hour. We know that her life will know years of loneliness, that her widowhood will be a thing most sacred and beautiful. Yet there is no vulgar



abandonment of grief, here. All is quiet, all is hushed, all is controlled. No one who holds in his hand the original sketch in water-colours can help speaking in a whisper. The spell cast by the intensity of the drawing is too great.

This sketch is the work of a student, one of the students of the Calcutta Art School. Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore can no longer be said to represent his own school of painting by himself. He has succeeded in creating a following. The pupils of the Art School have begun to produce original work of true value. It may be said that Modern Indian Art at once genuinely Indian and genuinely Modern—is born at last. The Indian mind is at work in this field of human endeavour.

It is always easy to be wise after the event, but one feels that the outstanding characteristics of these new drawings might perhaps have been foreseen. The first thing that strikes the beholder is *their meditative power*. Each picture seems to have been thought of, in a great silence. This is another way of saying that the Indian Artist has a unique power of portraying self-restraint. This quality pervades the picture before us. It is equally distinctive of the exquisite “Surya” of another student, to be reproduced in another issue of this paper. In “The Telling of the news of Kurukshetra to Dhritarashtra,” it would appear, from accounts given, that the same quality is found,—the suggestion of intensity controlled.

Another quality for which these pictures are remarkable is that of simple splendour and refinement. The furnishings of a king's bed-chamber, here, are a couch, a lamp, a carpet, and a fan! The reproduction, too, cannot bring out, as the emphasis of colour enables the original to do, the supreme decorative value of the touches of gold on couch, fan and sari, the bracelet on the Queen's arm, or the exquisitely beautiful lamp, hanging low, behind the screen afforded by the bed. The window of massive stone left empty, adds another touch of magnificence. Where did these boys learn such dignity, such almost sublimity, of household furnishing? The tiling of the floor, in the black and white print, is

too prominent, as is also the pattern of the carpet. But these faults do not exist in the original.

Those who care for the birth of a great new art of India, worthy of her past, and fit to become one of the springs of her future, may pray, with trembling joy, for the work now being done, and the beginnings now being shown, in the Calcutta Art School, under Mr. A. N. Tagore. Nor must we forget that to Mr. E. B. Havell is due the credit of having foreseen these possibilities, and having laboured to make the appointments that have proved so fruitful.

### *Ahalya*

This picture, by Babu Nanda Lal Bose, forms one of the finest achievements of its gifted artist. Whether we look at the petrified woman, or at the sage Vasishtha, or at the youthful heroes, we carry away the same impression; thus it must have been, for it could not have been so beautiful otherwise. To produce such an impression is a great triumph for an artist of any age and experience. But while freely admitting this we do nevertheless feel that it has one flaw. It may be that its very perfection is the source of this defect. The beauty and refinement of Rama and his brother Lakshmana are almost too great. They verge upon the feminine. They have nobility of birth and race. Every line is stamped with it. They have benignity. The compassion of Rama is evident for the woman whom he is about to deliver from her age-long enchantment. But nobly-born and beautiful women might feel and look as much. We miss the distinctively masculine touch. We want the man who is a man, and could never, in his untamed and irrepressible strength, be anything else. We want the pride and greatness of the Incarnation, as well as his tenderness. The same is true, though in another way of the Rishi. Why should there be weakness, albeit amiable, in his face? In the simplicity of her personality and the austere dignity of her penance, Ahalya herself forms to our thinking the strongest element in the group. Great and true womanhood has slept in the

rock these many centuries, we feel before her. Come, Lord of the Universe, and by Thy mercy set it free!

### *Damayanti's Swayamvara*

The moment depicted in this picture is that of the appeal of Damayanti to the gods. She has reached the dais on which sits the king of the Nishadas. Certain it is that he is there. But alas, there are five of him, and how is she to choose her betrothed husband?

The scene, as shown to us by the artist, is full of tenderness and charm. One longs for colour. The picture is almost in monochrome.

The form of Nala is, perhaps overyouthful and beautiful. Nor do we believe that in the heroic ages men sat with flowers in their hands, supported by cushions. The sword, one thinks, would be a truer toy for kings! Yet the grace and humour of the old story are undoubtedly well rendered.

It is said that in India Damayanti is not so warmly idealised, as by the European mind. This is a pity, for she assuredly deserves the dreaming of a world. Of all the heroines of the Mahabharata, there is no other—except perhaps Gandhari—so strong and living and rounded out, with the vigour and complexity of early Aryan womanhood.

Damayanti is like one of the Shakesperean women, in her courage and resourcefulness. And yet, in her tenderness to the stricken husband, and in her choice of the *one human* Nala, with all his imperfections,—‘stained by dust and sweat, garbed in the *fading* flowers, touching earth with his feet’—she embodies the heart’s heart of the Indian genius, so exquisite and restrained in its manifestations; and so remote from melodrama. Royal maidenhood, motherwit, steadiness, foresight, supreme wifeness, purity, patience, and infinite resource, these are the qualities that succeed one another in the ancient tale, so rapidly as almost to bewilder a fresh mind, with their wealth of revelation. It is still the Vedic age, for the gods are worshipped, and serpents bestow enchantments. Yet the Vedic age is passing, for the gods have be-







House of Sister Nivedita at 16 Bosepara Lane, Kolkata



come half-humorous. Neither great powers, nor yet great warriors; they are far more approachable than the snakes who dwell on the earth. And the gods, like men, have begun to yield up their own supremacy to those all-governing ideals of truth and purity that are embodied in Nala and Damayanti.

The story is one of the fairest flowers of the Indian Heroic Age. Nay, where shall we find its peer in Indo-European literature?

### *Jagai and Madhai*

In pure line-drawing, with scarcely the aid of a touch or a wash of colour, stands the picture of Jagai and Madhai, by Babu Nanda Lal Bose. It is another of the great technical triumphs of the artist and the school, for the amount of labour that must have gone to the production of a work in this kind, at once so small and so perfect, would be almost incredible to the mind of the mere layman. Firm anatomical drawing, the strokes that in their thousands make hair, the definite and harmonious patterning of the turban, the washes of colour that suggest modelling, and stand for light and shade, all these imply lavishness of skill and time. And how exquisite is the sum total! An extraordinary proof of the technical perfection of this tiny work, lies in the fact that under a magnifying glass, it is the modelling of the two faces that becomes most prominent.

In the shelter of a sand-hill, beside a great river, the two heroes of hilarity have spread a skin, and seated themselves for an hour of good fellowship. It is the rascal on the near side, we may venture to wager, who has had the forethought to provide himself with the wine-jar, and *three* cups, for the potations of delight. The further of the two is responsible for nothing more than the mat on which they sit, and the dish of fruit that will afford them a royal dessert. The drowsy joys of the hookah, when wine shall be done, are foreseen by the more provident also. It is a fine rapture, this, that seizes Jagai and Madhai, as they gaze for a moment on the silvery

liquid. It suggests that it is not so much the joys of the flesh as those of the imagination that appeal to them even in the wine-cup. They pause a moment, in the fashion of those who would drink a health, while some thought of overweening fascination is invoked, to be capped by the draught.

But the delight that envelopes them is wholly innocent. They are madcaps, not criminals, child-like, not cunning. Even in the hour of conviviality, there is nothing revolting in their pleasure. The beautiful hands of refinement and good birth, are very noticeable in both. The tie of affection that knits them together, like grown-up schoolboys, has a frankness and ease that is refreshing. These are not souls subject to breezes from the meaner shores of feeling. Even in their sins they are high-hearted and strong in mutual loyalty and comradeship.

They are, in sober fact, the stuff of which saints may, by rare good luck, be made. For sudden conversions do not occur, where men are sunk in vice, or saturated with vulgarity. Those extraordinary psychological revolutions of which religious history is full, are never the miracles that they are painted. They are miracles, indeed, if by that term we mean to refer to the supreme grace and virtue of the soul that influences. But the effect produced, is never a matter outside law and reason. If Mary Magdalene is suddenly enrapt by the shadow of the Christ upon the street in which she dwells, it is because in her life there has always been an undercurrent of quest for the ideal, there has always been disinterestedness in her giving of herself. And similarly, it is a mistake to think that Jagai Madhai—so beloved in Bengal, because where they were received, there must be hope, even for us!—were sunken in iniquity. Had they been so, Nityananda might have offered embraces in return for blows a thousand times, without avail. But no, they were boisterous troublers of the peace of quiet folk. They were mischievous players of rude practical jokes, they filled the air of their place and time with the sound of their lawlessness and riot; yet at bottom they remained right knightly. Their roughness

was fearlessness; their cruelty was thoughtlessness. The faggots were ready piled, in their hearts, to blaze into the fires of generous love. They were lighted on that day when a man, drunk with God-consciousness, pushed forward to throw his arms about the rude assailants who had just caused his blood to flow. It was then that Jagai and Madhai understood for the first time wherein lay that highest ecstasy for which unknown to themselves, all their daring lives had been a search. All the anticipations and all the disappointments of the wine-cup stood explained. Rapture attained was at last revealed, and it was to be reached by an unknown road. Away, then with the joys of the senses! Avaunt, all counterfeit intoxications! Nothing lower than the first step towards the best shall content us henceforth. The rascals of the quiet town of Nadia, have become the child-like saints of the Vaishnava story. They who persecuted the congregation, have taken their place amongst its preachers and worshippers. The capacity for all this, is suggested by the picture before us, in which the delight produced by wine, is nevertheless not gross or low.

### *Vikramaditya and the Vetala*

Through the dimness of reproduction, this picture speaks. Vikramaditya marches on through the night, while the skeleton-figure on his back curls itself weirdly about him, laughing hollowly at the defeat it foresees for the King. How uncanny is the Vetala! How childlike and determined Vikramaditya! The sketch is full of honour. It belongs of course to the grotesque side of art, and while we love not the grotesque, in and for itself, there can be no doubt that Indian fearlessness in dealing with it, is one of its greatest signs of strength and power.

Nevertheless we would remind all students of art that their true function is the revelation of the beautiful, the true, and the good. It is not the fugitive moments of personal experience, but the eternal and the universal, that come best to the world through them. Laughter is the salt and season-

ing of life, but to cause it requires only a minor degree of genius, vastly more common than the power to paint a Sita or a Yudhishthira.

The story of this picture is as follows:—

“Three men were born in the city of Ujjayini on the same day and at the same time: the first was Vikramaditya, born in the king’s house; the second, an oilman’s son, and the third, a yogi or anchorite who was wont to kill all he could to sacrifice to Kali. This yogi killed the oilman’s son and, plotting the destruction of king Vikrama, had the body of the oilman’s son hung from a tree in a cemetery and asked Vikrama to go to the cemetery on a dark night and fetch the body which was possessed by a Vetala (vampire) so that he might perform a human sacrifice before Kali. The yogi’s intention was to sit on the body of the dead oilman’s son and sacrifice king Vikrama to the goddess. The Vampire, while being carried by Vikrama, tells him the twenty-five tales—“Vetala Panchavimsati.” After each tale, the Vetala slips away to the cemetery, and each time Vikrama has to again bring him down from the tree. During the telling of the 25th tale, the Vetala speaks of the real intention of the yogi and persuades Vikrama to kill him and thus gain the merit of human sacrifice to Kali, thereby becoming the king of the world.”



BABU UPENDRA KISOR RAY

### *The Churning of the Ocean*

The Churning of the Ocean is one of those subjects of which we read in Hindu mythology, with a feeling that no ingenuity of artists could ever reduce them to pictorial forms and proportions. This picture shows that we were mistaken. It is evident that a Hindu, brought up on the story from babyhood, has his own way of imagining even an idea so complex and extravagant. The humour and variety with which the Asuras are represented here is delightful, and equally so is the tender fairy-likeness of the crowned Gods, on the left. But the power of the artist to deal with the non-human elements in his conception is less great. In treating the surface of the Ocean as a floor, on which the supernatural beings can maintain their footing, he is undoubtedly right enough. His ancient Assyrian method of showing that the sea is the sea by depicting the fishes in it, does not however strike one as equally happy. Undoubtedly he is right in his suggestion of the vague belching-forth of fire and smoke from the depths below, but why does he place the churning-rope-snake half way up the ascent of Mount Mandara, where it would have been sure to slip off? And why does he place *below* this, and therefore close to the water—not lifted high into the sun-light—all those sparks and drops; and that iridescence which suggest the *summit* of a fountain? The moon had to be shown, as one of the objects brought forth by the divine churning, but it is a little too loud. The sea in the middle distance, by evenness of its tint, is made to look like a low wall rising perpendicularly out of the Ocean-surface. And most of all, the snakes' heads are very unconvincing. Snakes do not branch outwards and upwards, like trees. And their thin necks and tiny heads, in conjunction with the thickness of the body coiled round Mount Mandara, feel like an anti-climax. Better is the device of ropes, em-



ployed by the gods, although even at their end, the extremity of the tail is not very snake-like.

Having enumerated these points, however, we have exhausted the faults of the work. It is well-known that the joinings of angel's wings, second pairs of arms, and additional heads of serpents are amongst the stumbling blocks and crucial difficulties of the artist in all countries. But Indian art has attacked the question with such boldness and grace that our demands of the Indian artists are doubtless very high! Coming back to the human aspect of this picture, there is wonderfully much to be said for it. It is full of the play of the strong and grotesque on the one side, and the equally strong, but noble and beautiful on the other, and the power and daring of the whole conception are undeniable.

ASIT KUMAR HALDAR

*The Vina*

“What is the song my heart sings?  
I know, I know, I know—”

We have here a small work, of indescribable beauty of drawing, colour, and setting. The rich autumn tints yield to an equally rich blue overhead. The terrace-roof, at nightfall or at dawn, suggests vastness and solitude, fit for the dreaming attitude and pensive air of the woman in the foreground. We can almost hear the faint sweet notes of the Vina in her hand, as she seeks for the song of the heart. The setting of this gem-like work suggests book-illustration. A letter or a sonnet would rightly fill the page below it.

We confess however to a feeling of bewilderment as to the Persianised Bengali script. What is the reason of this? It reminds us of the adage.

“Neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring.”

Is it for its beauty that the Persian lettering has been imitated? Persian script is beautiful of course, but then, so is Bengali. Is it for a certain sentimentality that fits its form to the subject here? We fancy the true scribe of Persian would hardly thank us for such an explanation, nevertheless despite eccentricities of inscription, this work is exceedingly fine, and we congratulate the artist on his achievement.

SUKHALATA RAO

*Srimati, Martyr*

In an old Nepalese book, called *A Century of Buddhist Legends*, occurs the story of Srimati, Martyr. Historically, it is worthless, for the events it narrates could not possibly have had to do with Ajatashatru, the contemporary and penitent of Buddha. If the tale is to be regarded as true at all, it must be placed a thousand years later, in the reign of Shashanka of Bengal, the enemy of Buddhism, in the middle of the seventh century A.D. Ajatashatru between the date of his accession and that of his recorded visit to the Lord, might possibly have gone through a period of coldness and hostility to the Great Teacher. But it could not have proceeded to the lengths here described, nor can we imagine the worship of minor personal relics of Buddha so rigidly formalised, within the life-time of the Blessed One Himself. Yet the tale has an interest of its own. It shows us, incidentally, how the stupa was worshipped. And in India, where breadth of thought and philosophic charity have made religious martyrdom almost impossible, we do well to treasure with a special reverence the names of such as are said, under any circumstances, to have died for their faith. Life holds no other thing so great as the cause or the idea for which we may joyfully die. Without this, history would be empty. Even the saints have needed it, and the story of Srimati, Martyr, is the legend of how an Indian woman was too absorbed in worship to know that the call to the scaffold had sounded, and went through death as the door to supreme beatitude.

“Raja Bimbisara”, says the *Avadana Shataka*, “receiving the knowledge of truth from the Lord, built a great stupa, in his zenana, over the Lord’s hair and nails, and the maids cleansed the place every day. When Ajatashatru had killed his father and ascended the throne, he forbade the women

to sweep and tend the stupa, on pain of death. But Srimati, a woman slave, caring about her own life not at all, bathed it well, and lighted it with a row of lamps. The king, in great rage, ordered her to the place of execution. After her death, she, as a Devaputri, appeared before the Lord in the Bamboo-grove, and, 'cleaving the mountain of human misery by the thunderbolt of knowledge', obtained all that is to be desired."

In this picture by Mrs. Sukhalata Rao, we see Srimati, Martyr, kneeling before the stupa. In her hands is the light which she is dedicating. At the foot of the stupa lie the flowers of worship. We could wish that they had lain on the bare floor, for the Benares tray, with its associations of cheapness and modernity, sounds a jarring note, in a composition that has much promise. We wish, also, that the stupa had been in full view, and the worshipper subordinated to the thing worshipped. But there is a suggestion of silence and a great space, nevertheless. The messengers of death are drawing near. But they will find a soul enrapt, absorbed. Srimati, Martyr, will not hear.

SAMARENDRANATH GUPTA

*Abhimanyu*

*Abhimanyu* by Samarendranath Gupta, is a picture that might have been called "At Bay" or "The last of a Forlorn Hope." Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna, faces the seven heroes, bent on his destruction. His quiver of arrows is exhausted. His bow itself is broken, and he falls back, for weapon, on the wheel of his dismembered chariot. He has broken the line of the Kuru hosts, and is in a world of the foe. There is nothing before him but defeat and death. Yet there is no slackening of his grip.

The delight of the play of battle has not left him. No shadow falls across the young face. No touch of despair or fear invades the pride and freedom of his bearing. So should a hero, and the son of heroes, fight, not counting the odds of battle, looking not at the end, but delighting in the conflict for its own sake, making friend and foe the same. The great fault of this picture is one of execution. The face of the young hero is strong and masculine enough, but the form, the waist, the half-seated limb, are all entirely feminine. One feels that this is the result of want of study of life, on the part of the artist. India is a country in which there are unique opportunities for study of the human body. We are no believers in the bony anatomy of the dissecting-room, or the nude un-drapedness of the artist's model, as preparation for the artist. These two things account for some of the worst faults of modern European art. The true anatomical opportunity of the artist lies in the observation of life, life on the roadside and the river-banks. The boatman, the coolie, the gardener, the woman with her beads, the exquisitely costumed figures that hurry past us on our streets, the children that play about our lanes.

Better than years of Paris is an hour of Calcutta or Benares, in this respect. We are the less happy, therefore,



when an artist who should by this time have observed, thought, and assimilated, till he has a firm grip of form and movement, falls back on the childish European habit of dressing and posing a figure, in order to draw from it, and when for the purpose of drawing a man,—he takes a woman as his model. For this is what the artist here has evidently done. Even the dress and ornaments of his warrior-prince, though they may be defended in detail, produce in their totality, a feminine effect. There is nothing here of the roughness of masculine strength. There is none of the blood and dust of a struggle to the death. The young noble is dressed as if for a *darbar*, and even the jewels in his hair have not been disarranged!

In decorative quality, however, the picture is most attractive. Rich and glowing as is the reproduction, the original is still more beautiful. In feeling for beauty, *Sāmarendranath Gupta* has qualities that ought to carry him far. He needs to grapple with ideals, and bring the utmost powers of his intellect to bear upon the presentment of great personalities and critical moments.

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### *The Coronation of Sita and Rama*

This picture has been bought recently by the Committee of the Calcutta Art Gallery.

No idea of its beauty can be given to those who cannot see its colour for themselves. Though small, it is a masterpiece, chiefly in different shades of yellow. Its date is supposed to be about 1700. The Artist is unknown. In style it belongs to what it is convenient to call the School of Lucknow, representing a later development of the kind of *missal*-painting which was practised under the Moguls, and the whole history of which is to be studied in the magnificent library presented by a noble Mohammedan family to the city of Bankipur.

In conception, 'The Coronation of Sita and Rama' is mediaeval. It compares, in European Art, with pictures of the Court of Heaven. But I cannot remember ever to have seen that idea expressed there with such masterly simplicity and thoroughness. We have here, it will be noticed, a King's garden and throne, with a palace behind. It is the royal and divine household of Heaven. The Divine Pair sit to receive worship. Around them stand the other persons of the sacred drama, together with their retinue. In the background are seen white walls of Ayodhya. And a magnifying glass makes only more evident the marvellous perfection of detail here. We may note also, in this old Indian picture, the perfect correctness of the perspective. There is no doubt in the artist's mind that the vertical is always the vertical, and the parallel lines converge as they recede.

But Ayodhya here is a place, not a city. The home of the soul, the whitewalled vision, is a royal and divine abode, not the country of a great multitude. In this, the idea of the artist is exactly the same as that which the church was always imposing on the mind of Europe. Yet in an Italian picture, of a corresponding thought and period, we should probably have had, as background to the sacred group, some fragment of a great city.

The Indian picture expresses unity. The Italian would have been full of broken suggestions. This is because the one speaks out of a full and coherent social order, present to the consciousness of all its children. The other would have been the utterance of something immeasurably more complex, but also less aesthetically perfect.

The pearls in this picture are real, being set into the painting. The frame is of mirror. The artist is unknown.

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

*Sainte Geneviève Watching Over Paris*

Sainte Geneviève is the Patron Saint of Paris. And here she is represented as praying over the city while it sleeps. This is one of the great frescoes of the Life of Sainte Geneviève painted by Puvis de Chavannes on the walls of the Pantheon in Paris. For the French have decorated this great Church,—the resting-place of their most honoured dead,—with civic and historic mural paintings, just as we may do in the future with our Federation Hall.

This particular picture might almost be oriental. The elderly saint wears a veil. True, it is that of the nun, not that of the eastern household. Yet, it suffices to strike the note of kinship. We note also the terrace-roof, the many flat house-tops and tiled towers of the sleeping city, the rose tree, so like our Tulsi, in the sun outside, and the tiny lamp within the doorway. The face and figure of Sainte Geneviève herself might well be those of some Hindu widow. Do we not all know a hundred of just this type?

And so, in what is perhaps the finest expression of the civic spirit in modern art, we have again the eternal mission of womanhood revealed to us as intercessor and vigil keeper for the sleeping world. As in the past to household and to church, so also in the future, in the light of a larger thought and wider consciousness a brooding power of prayer throbbing above the city and the nation.

J. F. MILLET

*Angelus*

Every one has heard of the controversy between realism and idealism in art. And yet no picture could offer us stronger proof than the one which is given herewith, that such distinctions are only verities in the hands of little men. For no one could be a greater realist than Jean François Millet, the leader of the little group of painters who have made of the French village of Barbizon a sacred name in European Art. No one could be a greater realist. And yet, was there ever such idealism, as casts its glow over his great masterpiece, the *Angelus*?

The word *Angelus*, it should be explained, is the name of a prayer, or, rather, of an act of worship. It consists of the words of salutation which the Angel said to Mary, the Blessed Virgin, when he told her that she was to be the mother of the Christ. "Hail Mary! full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!" In a very special sense, this salutation represents to the Christian what may be called the memorial of the Incarnation; it brings him closer than anything else to that mysterious union between the human and the divine, which according to his belief sums up the mystery of Jesus. Pious Catholics, therefore, make a habit of saying these words over to themselves at certain definite hours of morning, noon, and evening, and in Catholic countries, or in Catholic religious houses, a public signal is given for the prayer, by the ringing of the church-bell, when all work stops for a moment while it is quietly repeated.

This is the moment, then, which we witness in this picture. A couple of peasants, hoeing potatoes in a field, are suddenly caught up, by their own simple reverence and the sound of the *Angelus*-bell, into the great drama of heaven and earth. And we who look at the picture, become aware, not of

peasants at all, not of field or hoe, nor even distant church, but of the far larger and greater truth of a Nation's Labour sanctified by Prayer.

This picture has always seemed to me to have a special message for the Modern Indian Artist. For there is nothing here that did not come to Millet straight from Nature. Everything in the scene is a reproduction from fact. Yet it is fact reproduced, not as by the photograph, but as by the poet, the seer. It is Nature and fact *interpreted* by the mind and the heart of a great man.

It is realism. True. But it is also idealism. Ah, is there no scene, no figure in India today, that deserves the love that would struggle till it, too, had been expressed as worthily as this?



## NOTES ON PICTURES

### *Madonna and Child*

It seems wise, in our reproduction of notable European pictures, to go on for a series of months giving only modern works. In this way, we hope to create a broad impression in the mind of the reader, as to the subjects and methods of the European art of the present age, and then go back to an earlier period, and try to illustrate the way in which this power was gained, by reproducing a few typical examples of older master-pieces.

One reason for choosing this order of procedure, lies perhaps in the fact that if our readers saw first a 'Virgin and Child' by Botticelli, the 'Avenue of Trees at Middelharnis' by Hobbema, a few Madonnas by Raphael, and the 'Last Supper' by Leonardo da Vinci, they might not care for the much slighter work of the moderns. Men were much more serious over their painting in the old days, and consequently they gave birth to conceptions which carry with them an air of eternity. They painted in the grand style. Modern work is slighter, more personal, it seeks intimate and elusive moments. And by the same rule, while it is often exquisite, it is almost always fugitive, in the impression it makes on the beholder.

When it fails, on the other hand, it fails by pettiness and melodrama, whereas the old painters were always sincere, never self-conscious, and may have been stiff or crude or exaggerated in many ways, but could never by any means have been guilty of vulgarity.

One great reason for these differences lies in the fact that the artists of Italy, Germany and Holland, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, had a much smaller choice of subjects than the moderns. At first, at least in Italy, they painted very little except religious subjects. Then they began to draw upon the Greek and Latin classics, and

we have Venuses and Auroras and Sun Gods, and the rest. It was in Holland that the idea of realism, or painting the common things of common life, was born. And nowadays it often seems as if an artist's only idea were to paint something that had never been painted before. Yet even now, the dreamers and poets of Europe—and a painter is only a poet singing in colour—cannot help turning back time and again to the old religious themes. Perhaps a man feels that until he has painted a Madonna, or a Last Supper, like the old masters, he has not fully measured his power. Perhaps the impulse is finer than this, a desire to translate high ideals into the common tongue. In any case, some of the finest pictures, even in modern times, are religious and Christian. This was so, though not in its full sense, with the two modern European pictures which we have already given, 'St. Geneviève Watching Over Paris,' by Puvis de Chavannes, and the 'Angelus' by J. F. Millet. But of the picture which we give in the present month, it is true in a much larger way. This is actually a modern Madonna, by a living painter, Dagnan Bouvert.

Different as they are in many ways, there is something in the spirit of this work that brings it and the 'Angelus' of Millet very close together. It is the blending of the ideal with the real. In this picture, we scarcely know whether the mother is portrayed as an Italian peasant-woman or as a nun. The child is an Italian peasant-baby. In no detail has the artist shrunk from faithful copying of his original. The arbor in which we see the two, is a vine-clad verandah cooling the door of a peasant-home, a common form, it may be, for the Italian farm house or cottage. But it is meant to suggest a cloister. The simple woollen gown of the mother with the heavy peasant *Sabots*, is meant for the habit of the nun. Every detail of the painting is charged with symbolism. We are made to realise that this is not the mother of Jesus, nor yet the peasant wife it seems. It is the very soul of man, of each or any of *us* clasping to itself that thought it holds most dear.

To be fully felt, this picture should be seen for the first time suddenly. It is only in this way, that one can be adequately touched and held by the wonderful intimacy of the eyes. I know of no other picture, of any period, in which the heart is so powerfully made to tell the secret of its own tenderness.

RICHTER

*Queen Louise*

Doubtless this picture is known to many of our readers. It is the portrait of that beautiful queen of Prussia, to whose reiterated entreaties for her country Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have been first deaf, then half-humorous and last of all abrupt, in his refusal. The so-called "insult" offered by him to Queen Louise in the beginning of the century, was diligently kept in mind by those who desired to stir up war with France, and had no little part in bringing about the terrible revenge of 1870. For Queen Louise was the mother of the old "Grey Kaiser" William, who was the first Emperor of United Germany, and she has become a kind of patron saint of the new German tradition.

We see her here, attired for the state banquet of Napoleon's reception, in what is known as an "Empire" gown, from the fact that it represents the fashion that characterised the Napoleonic Court. As a type of a noble and beautiful woman, a queen full of love of people and country, strong amidst reverse, sweet and patient under poverty, it deserves long study. The absence of all jewels save crown and wedding ring marks the moment as one of national desolation. The lofty brow shows intellect, even as the ermine cloak bespeaks the ceremonial occasion. But the clear forthshining eyes, and the face, with its gravity and innocence tell that this woman, seated amongst kings and guardian of a nation's vows, was none the less of peerless womanhood, full of purity and modesty and incorruptible simplicity, possessed of the mind of a statesman, and the heart of a child.

JULES BRETON

*Peasant Girls*

How beautiful and powerful, and yet how simple and true to common life, are these two peasant girls by Jules Breton! One has stopped, enchanted, on her way out to work in the sunrise, to listen to the song of the soaring lark; and the other, having finished her day's gleanings, is returning, with swinging step, to her home. In each, the beauty of the picture lies in something below the surface. In one it is the look of ecstasy, as if the child's heart joined in the bird's song; in the other more beautiful than the dark strong beauty of the face, is the balance and poise of the freely moving figure. It is a beauty seen constantly in Indian streets and roadways. How many hundreds of times in a day might one note just this queenly bearing in coolie woman or in peasant, but none, alas, have eyes, of reverent and sympathetic vision wherewith to see.

It is interesting to remember that out of seven modern pictures which we have now reproduced, six have been French, and one German. The French have made no secret of the fact that their one great object was the renewing of the home land—"pour refaire la patrie" and that for that, they were working so hard before the eyes of the world in science, in art, in literature, in industry, in agriculture; and even the German, Richter, in his portrayal of Queen Louise, seeks obviously the glory of Germany rather than his own.

There can be no doubt that some of the greatest art of the world, in many different ages, has been born of the impulse of Nationality, and still is the great idea fertile and potent, ready as ever to lead new generations to new and untried heights.



GUIDO RENI

*The Picture of Beatrice Cenci*

The picture which we print in this number as that of Beatrice Cenci was said to have been painted by Guido Reni. The traditional story of Beatrice need not be repeated here in detail. She was implicated in the murder of her father, who had according to tradition treated her most horribly. She was condemned and beheaded, though she persisted in the declaration that she was innocent. It is said that Guido Reni has in this picture reproduced her mournful looks of despair at the spectators when she was being led to the place of execution. But the results "of Bertolotti's investigations" "go far to deprive the story of the Cenci tragedy of the romantic elements on which Shelley's powerful tragedy mainly turns." "And Bertolotti further shows that the sweet and mournful countenance which forms one of the treasures of the Berberini Palace in Rome cannot possibly be a portrait of Beatrice by Guido, who never painted in Rome till some nine years after Beatrice's death." But whoever the subject and the painter of the picture might have been, its beauty is unquestioned. It has sometimes been spoken of as the saddest picture in the world.

Dickens describes it as follows:—"The portrait of Beatrice Cenci is a picture almost impossible to be forgotten. Through the transcendent sweetness and beauty of the face there is something shining out that haunts me. The head is loosely draped in white, the light hair falling down below the linen folds. Some stories say that Guido painted it the night before her execution, others that he painted it from memory, after having seen her on the way to the scaffold. I am willing to believe that, as you see her on his canvas so she turned toward him, in the crowd, from the first sight of the axe, and stamped upon his mind a look he has stamped on mine as though I had stood beside him in the concourse."



# STAR-PICTURES



# STAR-PICTURES

## I

FOR most of us there has been perhaps a golden hour of childhood when we dreamed ourselves back into the love and reverence of primitive man for the starry sky. In early ages, especially in the hot countries of the South, where day was an agony and night a delight, the coming of sunset must have been looked forward to by thoughtful minds as the opening of a great book, the only book that then existed. Astronomical passion has undeniably decreased with the growth of what we know as civilization. We of Europe could not today divide a Church on some difference of opinion about the date of Easter!

Primitive science, such as it was, was inextricably interwoven with the study of the stars, for the simple reason that man early became ambitious of fixing a date. We can hardly doubt that this was the fourth of those great steps by which we emerged into humanity. First the defining and accumulation of language, then the tentative handling of stones as tools, again the long subsequent discovery of fire, and last of all this, the measurement of the year. Today, with our accomplished theories of the cosmos, the obvious instrument of time-measurement would seem to be the sun; writing the steps of his progress from hour to hour and season to season with the pen of changing shadow-lengths. And in this empiric fashion something of the sort may have lain behind the early sacredness of poles, pillars, and obelisks. As the climax



of a great scientific theory on the subject, the sun, however, is only the successor in time-reckoning of the moon, for already of a hoary antiquity when solar measurement was born was the calculation of the year by the coincidence of the full moon with some given constellation.

A glance shows us how the process grew. As nations became organized and consolidated the popular science of rude time-measurement was transformed into a great priestly function and mystery. The year itself was worshipped as a whole, as well as in its component parts. The awe with which the women of Greece regarded certain of their own annual festivals of purification was a relic, doubtless, of an older state of things, in which they had been responsible for the anxious computation of the circling year. The Hindu festivals, scattered up and down the lunar months, were once so many steps by which to make sure of the recurrence of specific days. Calendar-making retains even now something of this its ancient religious character. Thus early science was bound up with religion, and the stars were watched before the moon or the sun was even dimly understood.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that man's early regard for the midnight sky was always serious. The blue and silver page was more to him in that far-off age than a world of thought and reverence, more even than a sphere of growing inquiry and enlarging knowledge. It was also a gigantic picture-book, an absorbing wonder-tale. How many of the semi-divine beings of whom his fancy was so full could be seen, the moment night arrived, shining up there against the blue! How soon must have been recognized the hero coursing across the sky, followed by his dog! And the Bengali name of Orion to this day—*Kal-Purusha*, the Time-man—tells us something of that early significance.

Strange relations of cause and effect were predicated, doubtless, of that lofty hero-world. Something like theological differences of opinion may have obtained as between different races touching the various functions of a given constellation in the divine economy. Men had long dreamed

of an immense bird, whose wings were the clouds, whose movements were felt as the winds, carrying sun and the stars on their ring-like course. And now, searching the heavens most eagerly at the moments of dawn and sunset, or at those turns of the seasons when weather and flood were telling what next to expect of the crops, if the vast outlines of a bird could be dimly descried at evening, in the imperfect tracing made by remote suns, what was to hinder Aquila or Garuda, the divine Eagle, from being held the jailor of the disappearing light? One race may well have held the stars of the Great Bear to be the bed, and another the reins, of the sun-god. How many of the most beautiful stories of old mythology might thus be proved to be at bottom grave and simple accounts of astronomical occurrences; how many of the Labours of Herakles, for instance, were in reality stories of his constellation! Whether Alcestis restored to the house of Admetus is not, in truth, the sun brought back to its place amongst the stars, or whether Perseus was not always a hero seen in outline between Andromeda and Cassiopeia—these questions, and others like them, will never, probably, be fully answered. A little we may be able to spell out from the very fringe of the great subject, but the whole story of the psychological origin of mythology we cannot possibly decipher. One thing, however, is fairly certain. The divine world of the stars, the great stage of the shining souls, was, to begin with, a confused world. Man had his luminous points of understanding, for he dedicated given stars to chosen characters by arbitrary acts of piety and wonder; but he could not map out the whole. Just as in the children's romances, Old Mother Hubbard meets and converses with Cinderella, and both of them with Captain Tom Thumb, or Goody-Two-Shoes, in one great *ollapodrida* of delightful absurdity, so we must not seek in the poetic forms that man gave to the earliest notions of the sky-world, for ideas that are perfectly organised, or sustained and self-consistent. It is enough, if the half-lights of analogy and allusion, falling on this strand or that in the twisted skein, enable us to piece out

intentions and interpretations that give us some clue to age and origin, as well as to the first bearing of the idea.

We can see easily enough that different communities may have adopted different starting-points in their study of the midnight sky or their measurement of time. One tribe perhaps would watch the movements of the star Agastya, as Canopus in Argo is said to have been called. The distinctively Indian idea that the heroes of the sky were meditating souls, plunged in thought and radiant with a light of which they were unconscious, must have been elaborated only gradually; but with its final acceptance the star Agastya would come to be known as Agastya-Muni, or Agastya the Sage, while the tribes that measured their year by Canopus—as the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas in Southern India may have done—would grow to look upon him as a deified or canonized ancestor. There is a valley in the Himalayas containing an ancient village which is known as Agastya-Muni. Is this some prehistoric tribal home, or is the secret of its dedication one we cannot hope to penetrate?

The folk-lore of Hinduism is familiar enough with the name of this Agastya Canopus. According to one story he swallowed the ocean. According to another he set forth on the first of the month for the South, and on his way from the Himalayas to the ocean he passed the Vindhya. Now for a long time there had been a quarrel between the two ranges of mountains, the Himalayas and Vindhyas, as to which should lift its head the higher. The Vindhyas, by their ambition, had threatened to shut out the light from mortals. As the great Agastya passed by, however, the Vindhyas could not refuse to bow themselves in reverence, whereupon the cunning old sage said: "It is well, my children! Remain thus till I return!" Alas! on reaching the shores of the South he plunged into the ocean and never returned, for which reason the Vindhyas remain to this day with lowered heads. In reference to this story he who sets forth on the first of the month is always said to perform Agastya-Jatra, the Journey of Agastya, and it is more than hinted that he may not

return. Meanwhile the picture of the coming forth from the North to South, the final plunge into the ocean, never to return by the way he came—though he will again be seen on starry nights passing over the head of the Vindhya from the North—sounds remarkably like a popular rendering of the astronomical observation of a bright star passing below the horizon.

But Agastya Canopus was not the only stellar progenitor of men. Early fancy played about the seven stars of the Great Bear. Weird tales are told of the deadly arrow—the arrow that slew the sun—shot at the year's end by the Wild Huntsman. And men loved, as they have always loved, the tender light of the Pleiades, the Spinning Women, or the Dancing Maidens, amongst whom shone Rohini, the Queen of Heaven. Arundhati, the Northern Crown, was another of the stars that bore a favoured race to fortune. Sirius, the Dog-star, did the same. And personification might in any of those cases, we must remember, by an easy series of transitions become ancestor-worship.

The earliest of male anthropomorphic gods is said to have been the Pole-star, and there is a touch of humour in the way he is portrayed up and down the pages of ancient mythology. The Pole-star, it seems, from his solitary position at the apex of the stellar system, gave rise to the notion of a god who was one-footed. How ancient is this conception will be guessed when we learn that the wild tribes of Australia have a star-god Turunbulun who is lord and protector of the Pleiades, and one-eyed and one-footed. After this Ódin, or the Cyclopes with their one eye, or Hephaistos, the Smith of Heaven, with his lame foot, need occasion us no surprise. This lame-footed god, again, forms an obvious stepping-stone to the one goat-foot of the great god Pan, that deep and tender Asiatic conception which found its way into Hellenic ideas from the older Phrygia. It is difficult to believe, and yet it is said, that the Pole-star deity was at one time identified with the goat. Thus the Rig-Veda contains numerous references to Aja-Ekapada—a name that may



be translated as either the One-footed Goat or the Birthless One-footed One. It is generally assumed that the second of these renderings is correct, and that it points to the sun. And if it had not been for the great god Pan and his one goat-foot, comparative mythology might have had to agree. Indeed, it is not easy to ignore this rendering entirely when we read in the Veda that "he who has one foot has outstripped them that have two." This would sound to a modern more like the sun than the Pole-star. But the ancient singer possibly meant that he who had but one foot had reached to the lordship and height of the universe. In this sense, of apex of the cosmos, Aja-Ekapada is constantly opposed to Ocean and the Dragon of the Deep, who is supposed to be the Rain-Cloud, the womb of all life, and to personify the vast and immeasurable abyss of the southern sky. Thus we have a pair of gods—gods of the North and South.

But if Aja-Ekapada really meant the one-footed Goat and if the name referred to the Pole-star, it is not to be supposed that we shall find no other and no more vulgar traces of his worship. It happens constantly in the history of Indian literature that a new wave of theology becomes the occasion for a recapitulation of an older theory of the origin of the universe. This fact is the good fortune of later students, for without it we should have been without any clue whatever in a majority of cases to the ancient conceptions. Of such an order, we may take it, is the story of Daksha. It was held by the promulgators of Aryan and Sanskritic views that Brahma had, vaguely speaking, been the creator of the worlds. But amongst those to whom he was sacred there grew up, we must remember, the philosophy of the inherent evil and duality of material existence. And with the perfecting of this theory the name of a new god, Shiva or Mahadeva, embodying spiritual enlightenment, became popular. Now what part could have been played, in the evolution of the cosmos, by these different divinities? This was a world in which good brought forth evil, and evil brought forth good, and good without evil was a mere



contradiction in terms. How then could the Great God be made responsible for anything so disastrous? Plainly, he could not. So the myth was elaborated that Brahma had at first created four beautiful youths to be the progenitors of mankind, and they had sat down to worship on the banks of Lake Manasasarovara. Suddenly there came to them Shiva in the form of a great swan—the prototype of the Paramahansa, or supreme swan, the title of the emancipated soul—who swam hither and thither, warning them that the world about them was an illusion and a bondage, and that their one way of escape lay in refusing to become fathers. The young men heard and understood, and plunging into meditation, they remained on the shores of the divine lake, useless for any of the purposes of the world. Then Brahma created the eight Lords of creation, the Prajapatis, and they it was who made up the muddle that is called this world.

The history of ideas is perhaps the only history that can be clearly followed out in India, but this is traceable with a wonderful distinctness. At this point in the history of Brahma, where He creates the Prajapatis, in a story whose evident object it is to show the part played by Shiva in the process of creation, it is obvious that we are suddenly taking on board the whole of a more ancient cosmogony. The converse fact, that the gods of that mythology are meeting for the first time with a new series of more ethical and spiritual conceptions than have hitherto been familiar to them, is equally indisputable, as the story proceeds. One of the new Prajapatis has an established conviction—incongruous enough in a new creation, but not unnatural in a case of great seniority—that he himself is Overlord of men and gods, and it is greatly to his chagrin and disgust that he finds his rank and pretensions ignored by that god who is known as Shiva or Mahadeva. In this very fact of the suddenness of the offence given, and the unexpectedness of the slight, we have an added indication that we are here dealing with the introduction of a new god into the Hindu pantheon. He is to be made a member of its family circle

by a device that is at once old and eternally new. The chief Prajapati—Daksha by name—out of wounded pride, conceives a violent feud against Shiva, the Great God. But Daksha had a daughter called Sati, who is the very incarnation of womanly piety and devotion. This maiden's whole soul is given up in secret to the worship and love of the Great God. Now she is the last unmarried daughter of her father, and the time for her wooing and betrothal cannot be much longer delayed. It is announced, therefore, that her Swayamvara—the ceremony of choosing her own husband performed by a king's daughter—is about to be held, and invitations are issued to all the eligible gods and princes. Shiva alone is not invited, and to Shiva the whole heart of Sati is irrevocably given! On stepping into the pavilion of the bridal choice, therefore, with the marriage garland in her hand, Sati makes a supreme appeal. "If I be indeed Sati," she exclaims, throwing the garland into the air, "then do thou, Shiva, receive my garland!" And immediately He was there in the midst of them with her garland round his neck.

The marriage so begun was duly carried out, and it is said that at the moment of its completion, when Sati stood before the Great God as His bride, He bent down to her and whispered, "Behold your Polar Star." The feud with Daksha was only further embittered by this alliance, and Sati's name was blotted out of her family's roll, nor was she invited to subsequent festivities at her father's house. Hence when the news was brought to Kailas,—the mountain heaven of the Great God and His bride,—that some unusually splendid sacrifice and banquet were about to be given by Daksha, Sati with all a woman's eagerness and curiosity, determined to return to the home of her childhood, for the occasion, and would take no nay. Clad in the rags of renunciation, she entered the banqueting hall, amidst shouts of laughter from the assembled family, who belonged to the divinities of power, brilliance and enjoyment of the world. By her father, however, whose blessing she immediately sought, Sati was

welcomed with a storm of anger and abuse directed against her absent husband. It is perhaps the pathos of this scene which has kept this ancient story a living force in India for so long. The idealism of the family has its conflicts and tragedies, and Sati standing before her father in womanly pride and indignation, to protect the name of the husband she adores, gives us a picture of one of these. Daksha will not be silenced, and Sati will not retain the body which has been defiled by hearing her husband accused. She refuses longer to continue as his daughter, and falls dead at her father's feet.

The news is carried to Shiva in Kailas. Plunged in his trance of prayer and meditation, the Great God is not easy to arouse, but once he understands the story that is brought, his wrath and sorrow are without bounds. He calls into being a great host of warriors, and followed by them, all ranged behind their generalissimo, Virabhadra, He turns to march down upon the palace of Daksha, there to find and carry off the body of Sati. Grief-intoxicated, He lifts it reverently to His shoulders, and is about to leave the scene, while the army of His minions proceed to wreck the palace of Daksha, and kill the prime author of the disaster. At this moment the Mother of Sati casts herself at the feet of Shiva, praying for her husband's life, which the Great God readily grants. His order is put in execution by his followers. But Daksha had been killed by the cutting off of his head, and there is now nothing to be found but a goat's head, from the sacrifice. This is hastily clapped on the headless body, and there the Prajapàti stands, alive, but with only a goat's head on the human body!

Ancient as is now the story of the wedding of the daughter of the older Lord of Creation with the new-comer amongst the gods, it is clear at this point that Daksha was already so old that the origin of his goat's head had been forgotten, and was felt to require explanation by the world of the day that accepted Shiva. To an age before the birth of Buddhism he may have been familiar enough, but the preaching of that

faith throughout the length and breadth of India must by this time have educated the people to demanding moral and spiritual attributes in their deities instead of a mere congeries of cosmic powers, and so trained, they came back, it would appear, to the conception of Daksha as to something whose significance they had forgotten.

Traces of something still more ancient are to be seen in the next act of this sacred drama, when Shiva, drunk with sorrow, strides about the earth, all destroying, bearing the form of the dead Sati on His back. The soil is dried up, plants wither, harvests fail. All nature shudders under the grief of the Great God. Then Vishnu, to save mankind, comes up behind Shiva, and hurling His discus time after time, cuts the body of Sati to pieces till the Great God, conscious that the weight is gone, retires alone to Kailas to lose himself once more in his eternal meditation. But the body of Sati has been hewn into fifty-two pieces, and wherever a fragment touches earth a shrine of mother-worship is established, and Shiva himself shines forth before the suppliant as the guardian of that spot.

This whole story brings vividly back to us the quest of Persephone by Demeter, the Great Goddess, the beautiful Greek myth of the northern winter; but in the fifty-two pieces of the body of Sati we are irresistibly reminded of the seventy-two fragments of another dead body, that of Osiris, which was sought by Isis and found in the cypress-tree at Byblos. The oldest year is said to have been one of two seasons, or seventy-two weeks. Thus the body of Osiris would perhaps signify the whole year, divided into its most calculable units. In the more modern story we find ourselves dealing again with a number characteristic of the weeks of the year. The fragments of the body of Sati are fifty-two. Does she, then, represent some ancient personification which may have been the historic root of our present reckoning?

In a general way goddesses are, as we know, long anterior to gods, and it is interesting to see that in the older myth of Egypt it is the woman who is active, the woman who



seeks and carries off the dead body of the man. The comparative modernness of the story of Shiva and Sati is seen, amongst other things, in the fact that the husband seeks and finds and bears away the wife.

In the mass of literature called the Puranas, hundreds of myths are embedded which pass unknown to all but the inquisitive, amongst the Hindus of today. Yet each one of these must have had importance at the time of its origin, and by careful examination might be induced to yield up its historical secret. One such curious legend concerns Saturn or Shani. At the birth of Ganesha, eldest son of the Mother of the Universe, his cradle was visited, it is said, by gods and demi-gods. Only one exception was there. Shani did not come. At last this fact was noticed by the Great Mother, and She inquired the reason of his absence. She was told that he feared to harm Her child, since it was matter of common knowledge that the head of one on whom Shani looked was likely to be burned to ashes at his glance. With easy pride, the Mother smiled, and assuring him that Her son could not be subject to his power, sent him a message of warm invitation and welcome. Accordingly Shani came. But what was the horror of all present when he looked at the babe, and instantly its head disappeared in a flame. How much greater was Shani than anyone had suspected!

At this catastrophe the Mother was profoundly disturbed, and commanded Her guest, somewhat sharply, at once to restore the head of Her child. But Shani smiled pleasantly, and pointed out that the head, as such, no longer existed. It lay in ashes before them. "Then send forth a servant and let him bring Me the head of the first one he meets!" commanded the Mother, in effect and Shani had no option save to obey. Only one who is in fault can be subject to Shani, and his emissary found none inadvertently doing wrong, till suddenly he came upon an elephant sleeping with his head to the north. This trifling fault brought him under the jurisdiction of Shani and hastily the servant cut off his head



and returned to put it on the infant's body. It is for this reason that Ganesha wears an elephant's head.

Two or three points are noteworthy here. The intention of the story is of course to show the power of Shani, and consequently the necessity for his propitiation. But as usual, in obedience to the Indian instinct for synthesis, the new claimant to more or less divine honours is also made to explain some anomaly in the faith that preceded him. And the faith with which Shani is thus connected, the tree on which the new belief is grafted, is the worship of Ganesha, perhaps the oldest of organized and sacerdotalized popular worships in India. This fact alone is eloquent of the antiquity of the propitiation of Shani. It is interesting also to see that the very point in the image of Ganesha that is so anomalous and tantalizing to ourselves, was held similarly inexplicable at the time of the incoming of Saturn and the other planets. Whatever piece of symbolism this white head on red body originally expressed, whether it was the setting sun beneath the clouds or what not, was now long ago forgotten; and the children of Ganesha, not doubting his divinity, were ready to accept any explanation of its origin that might offer itself to them. This explanation came together with the new-fangled worship of the planets, from some people who feared and propitiated their deities. Long, long ago had the worship of the gentle Ganesha gone out to the nations of the farther East, and now the fear of Shani was added to it in the land of its birth from foreign sources. Was Chaldea by any possibility the centre from which came this worship of the planets?

Even the planets must sooner or later have shared in the general process of the spiritualizing of stellar myths, and a significant instance seems to be the story of Devayani and Kacha, from the opening volume of the Mahabharata. Here it would appear that we have a very ancient fragment, for as a poetic episode the story stands loosely connected with an archaic genealogical relation—not unlike the Semitic account of Sara and Hagar—in which appear mixed

marriages between Brahmins and Kshatriyas, polygamy, and the matriarchal custom and ideal of proposals made by a woman held binding upon the man. All these features of the legend are felt by the final editor to be highly anomalous, and time and words are inartistically spent in arguments for their justification by the characters involved. But this is a very common feature in the dressing-up of old tales to take a place in new productions, and the arguments only confirm the perfect naturalness of the incidents when first related. How Devayani, the daughter of Shukra or Venus the Brahmin, became the ancestress of certain royal or Asura princes and tribes, and how the king whom she wedded was also the progenitor of three other purely Asura-races, or dynasties,—these things may have been the treasured pedigrees of families and clans. From a national point of view it may have been binding on the annalist to include them in every version of the epic chronicles. As a poet, however, the point that interested the last editor of the Mahabharata was a matter that also interests us, a romance that occurred to Devayani in her youth, and stamped her as a daughter of the planetary order, though wedded to a king.

The mythos comes down from that age when there were constant struggles for supremacy between the gods (Devas) and the demons (Asuras). Who were these Asuras? Were they long-established inhabitants of India, or were they new invaders from the North-West? They are not classed with the aboriginal tribes, it is to be marked, or referred to as Dasyus or slaves. There still remain in the country certain ancient metal-working communities who may represent these Asuras in blood, as they certainly do in name. And the name of Assyria is an abiding witness to the possibility of their alien origin. In any case it would appear as an accepted fact, from the story of Devayani, that the Asuras were proficient in magic. It is told that they obtained a Brahmin to act as their sacrificial priest, who was in some vague way an embodiment of Shukra, the planet Venus. The gods, on the other hand—meaning perhaps the Aryans, who were

Sanskrit-speaking—were served in the same capacity by a Brahmin representing the influence and power of Brihaspati, or Jupiter. The planetary allusions in these names are confirmed by the reproachful statement of the gods that “Shukra always protects the Asuras, and never protects us, their opponents!” No one could grumble that the archbishop of a mixt people did not protect them. But the complaint that a divinity revered by both sides shed protecting influences on one alone, is not unreasonable.

Chief of all the magic lore possessed by Shukra was a master spell for bringing back the dead to life. By aid of this, all those Asuras who were killed by gods, were revived by him, and thus the forces of the Asuras never grew less, while those of their enemies were diminished by every warrior who fell.

When at last the gods came to feel that on these terms the case was hopeless, they went to the young Kacha, son of Brihaspati, their priest, and suggested that he should go as their emissary, and become the disciple of Shukra, the high-priest of the Asuras, so as to possess himself of his knowledge. The gods also make the nefarious suggestion that Kacha will best achieve this end if he is attentive and affectionate in his demeanour, both to the old sage Shukra, and to his young and beautiful daughter, Devayani!

Kacha accepts the embassy of his race, and dedicates himself to the task of acquiring for them the alien knowledge. He presents himself frankly before Shukra as the son of Jupiter, and begs to be taken as his disciple, a request to which Shukra accedes the more gladly, in consideration of the courtesy thereby accorded to his colleague Brihaspati.

As had been foretold, the lad found his way made easier for him by the affection and charm of the child Devayani. From the first he exerted himself to win her regard. He sang and danced for her amusement, brought her constant offerings of flowers and fruit and was always ready to gratify her whims. And she on her side, by the innocent sweetness of her behaviour and the winsomeness of her manner

became dear to him. Time passed, and the two were as much together and as mutually devoted as a brother and sister.

After a while the presence of Kacha began to attract the attention of the Asuras, amongst whom he was living. And their suspicions fastened on the real motive of his discipleship. He was there to wrest from them the treasured secret of the Asuras, the science of the revival of the dead. As they were an inferior race, 'who had no scruple about the slaying of a Brahmin,' they determined to kill the youthful student.

There came an evening, when, the sun being at his setting and Shukra's sacred fire being already kindled, Devayani watched the cows returning from the forest,—but with them came no Kacha! In terror, she ran to her father, declaring that his disciple had been lost or killed, and that unless he could be brought back, she did not care for life. To soothe her, her father readily enough pronounced the magic formula, "*Let this man come*", and Kacha whose body had been hewn to pieces, and devoured by wolves and jackals, responded to the call, and stood once more, smiling, before his master and his master's daughter.

The next time Kacha is found gathering flowers, and is killed and pounded into paste, and mixed with the waters of the ocean! Again Devayani misses him, and again she has recourse to her father, who once more calls him back to life. Nevertheless for the third time the Asuras succeed in putting him to death, and pounding the body into paste, proceed to mix this paste with the high priest's wine and give it to Shukra himself to drink—an act which afterwards causes him to curse the drinking of wine by Brahmins for all time.

But when Devayani comes this time for her father's aid in restoring her foster-brother's life, the much tried Shukra somewhat naturally objects. Once or twice, he protests, is a matter to be understood, but his daughter's playmate has a habit of being killed! He is tired of the labour of restoring



him to life. In the end however, the tears and entreaties of a spoilt child prevail, and Shukra begins to utter the magic incantation. What is now the astonishment of both father and daughter, when a feeble voice answers, from within the person of the priest himself: "Alas, dear master, what shall I do? If I obey and come forth, I shall, in the act, rend thee in twain, and be thereby the instrument of thy destruction! Yet if I remain here, I am undoubtedly lost!" In this very pretty dilemma, urged on by his child's passionate insistence, Shukra can do only one thing, impart to his disciple the secret spell by which the dead are to be revived, and then bring him forth, leaving it to him to restore life to himself. Thus at last Kacha gains the knowledge he has sought.

The period of the vow of the student soon after expires, and Kacha announces the fact that he must return to his own people. But this is more than Devayani can support in silence. She entreats him to make her his wife, and remain with her and her father for ever. Alas, Kacha has acquired the idea that the life given him by Shukra makes him in truth Devayani's brother, and his notions of refinement for this reason make the very thought of marrying her, abhorrent to him. In his view of the situation, he is inflexible. Yet Devayani stands unaffected by any of his arguments. Neither delivery nor generosity prevails with her to make her respect the principles and strength of this decision. She has met, for the first time in her life, with a man who can neither be wheedled nor coaxed, and in a passion of anger she declares "The knowledge that thou hast gained, if thou dost refuse to make me thy wife, shall remain without fruit!"

From the daughter of the great Shukra, these impulsive words have all the force of a great curse, and Kacha makes haste to avert their worst results. "So be it," he says gently, "yet they shall bear fruit, in those to whom I shall impart them!" And then he adds, that since it was not from want of love, but entirely from honour, that he has refused her desire, she shall, as a punishment for this her anger, never



become the wife of a saint or a scholar, a sage or a seer. In accordance with this prophecy, Devayani afterwards marries, not a Brahmin like her own father, but the great king, Yayati, and through this marriage is the ancestress of the Yadus and Turvasus, while by an inferior wife of royal birth, the king is the ancestor, and Devayani's children the kinsmen, of three other clans or races whose names are given.

What were the original fragments from which this narrative was drawn? Is the whole thing a genealogical record on the inclusion of which, in a national history, certain tribes had a right to insist? And is the incident of Kacha an invention of the latest poet, acting as editor, to explain what had in his time become the anomalous tradition, of the marriage of Devayani, daughter of a Brahmin, to Yayati of the royal caste? It may be so. And yet, as against this, we have that statement, so like a genuine echo from the distant past, that "there were in former times frequent contests between gods and Asuras for the possession of the whole three worlds." In bringing about the highly dovetailed condition of all the parts of the story as it now stands, we may be sure that the latest poet has had a large hand, but in all probability there was some foundation in long-inherited lore, even for the romance of Kacha and Devayani. In all probability, the proposal of Devayani is a legend born in the age of the Matriarchate, when it was not unnatural for a man to become a member of his wife's kindred. Devayani, therefore, in urging her hand on the acceptance of Kacha, is actuated, fundamentally, by the desire to prevent the precious magical formula, from passing into the hands of her people's enemies, and Kacha, similarly, whatever he may allege, out of motives of politeness, as the reason of his refusal, is really inspired by the idea that this is the last temptation in the way of his mission, and that his one duty is to leave the Asuras and return to the gods, taking with him the knowledge they sent him out to gain. And finally this romance, in this its completed presentment, bears more than a trace of that poetising

of the planetary influences, of which the ancient art of Astrology may be regarded as the perfected blossom and fruit.

But of myths that represent a spiritualizing interpretation of the stars the very jewel is probably the story of Dhruva. It is frankly a statement of how the Pole-star came to be so steady and the Hindu name of the Pole-star is Dhruvaloka, the place of Dhruva.

Dhruva was a child and a prince—the eldest son of a king and his chief queen. There was, however, a younger wife who had a great ascendancy over the mind of Dhruva's father, and in consequence of her jealousy and dislike the prince and his mother Suniti were banished from the court, and sent to live in retirement in a cottage on the edge of a great forest. We are here dealing, we must remember, with a Hindu tale of the period when every story forms an epos of the soul, and in the epos of the soul, the chief event is that by which arises a distaste for the material world. Young Luther sees his friend struck dead by lightning, and at once enters a monastic order.

This crisis in the history of the child Dhruva arises when he is seven years old. At that age he asks his mother to tell him who is his father. When she has answered, he has still another question. May he go and see his father? Permission is readily given; and on the appointed day the child sets forth. Seated on his father's knee, amidst all the joy of his love and welcome—for the little son is the king's darling,—the great disillusionment arrives. Dhruva's stepmother enters, and at the anger in her face and voice the father hastily puts down his boy.

Wounded to the core, the child turns, without speaking, and steals quietly away. He has sought for strength and found none. Even the strongest love in the world, a father's and that father a king, is without power or courage to be faithful and to protect. On reaching the home of their exile he has only one question to put to the anxious woman who has waited so eagerly during every hour of his absence, for

his return. 'Mother, is there anyone in the world who is stronger than my father?'

"Oh yes, my child!" said the startled queen, "there is the Lotus-eyed! In him is all strength!"

"And, mother," said the child gravely, "where dwells the Lotus-eyed? Where may He be found?"

Was there in the simple words some hint of danger, some note of a parting that was to throw its shadow over all the years to come? There must have been, for the mother gave, as if in fear, an answer that would fain make search impossible.

"Where dwells the Lotus-eyed, my son?" said she, "Oh! in the heart of the forest, where the tiger lives and the bear lives. There dwells He!"

That night, when the moon had risen and the queen lay sleeping, the child stealthily rose, to find his way to the Lotus-eyed. "O Lotus-eyed, I give my mother to Thee!" he said, as he stood for a moment at her side. And then, as he paused on the threshold of the house, "O Lotus-eyed, I give myself to Thee!" and stepped boldly forth into the forest. On and on he went. Difficulty was nothing. Distance was nothing. He was a child, and knew nothing of the dangers of his way. On and on, without faltering, he went.

After a while, still pursuing his way through that immeasurable forest, he came to the Seven Sages deep in their worship, and paused to ask his road to them. At last he came to the heart of the forest, and stood there waiting. As he waited the tiger came, but the child Dhruva stepped up to him, and said eagerly, "Art thou He?" And the tiger turned in shame and left him. Then the bear came, and again Dhruva went forward, saying, "Art thou He?" But the bear too hung his head and went away.

And then, as the child of the steady heart still waited and watched, a great sage stood before him who was Narada himself. And Narada gave him a prayer, and told him to sit down, there at the heart of the forest, and fix his whole mind on the prayer, saying it over and over again, and

surely he would find the Lotus-eyed. So there, at the heart of the forest, where we see the Polar-star, sits Dhruva saying his prayer. He has long ago found the Lotus-eyed, found him in his own heart. For he fixed his mind on his prayer with such perfect steadfastness, that even when the white ants came and built about him the mighty ant-hill of the midnight sky the child Dhruva never knew it, never moved, but stirless, all-absorbed, sat on and sits still, worshipping the Lotus-eyed for ever and ever.

### III

The spirituality which was characteristic of Aryan and Sanskritic conceptions in general, gained ground in India and began to colour the interpretation of all phenomena. It came to seem self-evident that the stars were the seats of meditating souls, steadfast in virtue. Even the shooting stars were explained as falling from heaven because their religious merit was exhausted! We can hardly doubt that the dedication of the days of the week to the sun and moon and five chief planets—the 'old planets seven,' as they are called—was a worship of propitiation. The planets had from the beginning been regarded as rebel beings, in some way opposed to the fixed order of the stars. They were wanderers. Great powers they could not fail to be, but errant they also were. It was most necessary, therefore, to propitiate the spirits that they embodied. From this stratum of thought, then, are born the names of the weekdays, which from the east of Bengal to the west of France or the north of Scandinavia, are sacred to the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. In this organisation of the idea of the planets, we meet with a new date, one long subsequent to the beginning of the age of star-worship. We have here the seven-day week, and a perfected theory of the place of sun and moon in the whole scheme of things. The very fact that no twinkling stars are included in the



category, shows that there was an accepted differentiation, a clear definition of the fixed stars as such behind this formulation. It may be that the mystic importance of the number seven was originally born of the contemplation of the constellation of the Great Bear. Or it is just possible that this particular enumeration of the planets was one at which the development of knowledge halted long, and that here the impressiveness of the number was born. At any rate, the seven-day week and the twelve-month year seem to have been known in old Assyria, as long ago as 4000 or 5000 B.C. Saturn was the deity of the original first day of the planetary week. This only confirms the idea that the dedication was, to begin with, one of propitiation. There are still homes in Bengal where the mother worships Saturn every Saturday, for the protection of her family. It is held that his power is highly spiritual, but a disastrous influence in things of worldly prosperity, and something of the same association hangs, to this day, about the name and idea of the sun himself. And yet such observances, indicating, as they must once have done, a new accession of thought and mythology, are now long superseded by developments of a very much higher order, and linger on, here and there, amongst anxious women, in something of a shamefaced and reserved fashion. The fortune-teller, stopping at the door one day, and reading palms, tells that some particular maiden is to be unlucky, and ought to avert evil, by worshipping the planets. But a hard-headed old grandmother, strong in puritanism and in intellect, will have none of it, and the worship goes unperformed.

A time came in Hinduism when religion turned its back on all the deities of power and worldly good. The god, like his worshipper, must eschew wealth and material benefits. Since five hundred years before the Christian era the Buddhist orders had been going up and down amongst the people popularising certain great conceptions of renunciation and personal development as the true end of religion. About the time of the Christian era the volume of these ideas was



becoming ripe for the taking of organised shape, in India itself, as a new faith. But the evolution did not cease at this point with the emergence of the worship of Shiva. Some few centuries later a new phase of this higher Hinduism was again elaborated, and the worship of Satya-Narayana appeared in his embodiment as Krishna. This religion was laid down and promulgated in the form of a great epic—the Indian national epic *par excellence*—which was now cast into its final form, the Mahabharata.

In the opinion of some amongst the learned we have here in the Mahabharata a recapitulation of all the old wonder-world of the early sky-gazer. Gods, heroes, and demigods jostle each other through its pages, and whence they came and what has been their previous history we have only a name here or a sidelight there to help us to discover. As in some marvellous tapestry, they are here gathered together, in one case for a battle, in another for a life; and out of the clash of the foemen's steel, out of the loyalty of vassal and comrade, out of warring loves and conflicting ideals, is made one of the noblest of the scriptures of the world. Is it true that, with the exception of what has been added and remoulded by a supreme poet, fusing into a single molten mass the images of aeons past, most of the characters that move with such ease across these inspiring pages have stepped down from the stage of the midnight sky? However this may be, one thing is certain: the very last scene that ends the long panorama is that of a man climbing a mountain, followed by a dog, and finally, with his dog, translated to Heaven in the flesh.

The five royal heroes for whose sake the battle of their prime was fought and won have held the empire of India for some thirty-six years, and now, recognising that the time for the end has come, they, with Draupadi their queen, resign their throne to their successors and set forth on their last solemn journey—the pilgrimage of death—followed by a dog who will not leave them. First, circling their great realm in the last act of kingly worship, they proceed to climb

the heights of the Himalayas, evidently by way of ascending to their rightful places amongst the stars. He who has lived in the world without flaw may hope for translation at the last. But, great as is the glory of the Pandava brothers, only one of them, Yudhishtira, the eldest, is so unstained by life as to merit this, the honour of reaching Heaven in the flesh. One by one the others, Bhima, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, together with Draupadi the queen, faint and fall and die. And still without once looking back, without groan or sigh, Yudhishtira and the dog proceed alone.

Suddenly a clap of thunder arrests their steps, and in the midst of a mass of brightness they see the god Indra, King of Heaven, standing in his chariot. He is there to carry Yudhishtira back with him to Heaven, and immediately begs him to enter the chariot.

It is here, in the emperor's answer, that we are able to measure how very far the Hindu people have gone since the early worship of purely cosmic deities, in the moralizing and spiritualizing of their deities and demi-gods. Yudhishtira refuses to enter the chariot unless his dead brothers are all first recalled to enter it with him, and adds, on their behalf, that they will none of them accept the invitation even then unless with them be their queen, Draupadi, who was the first to fall. Only when he is assured by Indra that his brothers and wife have preceded him and will meet him again on his arrival in the state of eternal felicity does he consent to enter the divine chariot, and stand aside to let the dog go first.

But here Indra objected. To the Hindu the dog is unholy. It was impossible to contemplate the idea of a dog in Heaven! Yudhishtira is begged, therefore, to send away the dog. Strange to say, he refuses. To him the dog appears as one who has been devoted, loyal in time of loss and disaster, loving and faithful in the hour of entire solitude. He cannot imagine happiness, even in Heaven, if it were to be haunted by the thought of one so true who had been cast off.

The god pleads and argues, but each word only makes the sovereign more determined. His idea of manliness is involved. "To cast off one who has loved us is infinitely sinful." But also his personal pride and honour as a king are roused. He has never yet failed the terrified or the devoted, or such as have sought sanctuary with him, nor one who has begged mercy, nor any who was too weak to protect himself. He will certainly not infringe his own honour merely out of a desire for personal happiness.

Then the most sacred considerations are brought to bear on the situation. It must be remembered that the Hindu eats on the floor, and the dread of a dog entering the room is therefore easy to understand. There is evidently an equal dislike of the same thing in Heaven. "Thou knowest," urges Indra, "that by the presence of a dog Heaven itself would be defiled." His mere glance deprives the sacraments of their consecration. Why, then, should one who has renounced his very family so strenuously object to giving up a dog?

Yudhishtira answers bitterly that he had perforce to abandon those who did not live to accompany him further, and, admitting that his resolution has probably been growing in the course of the debate, finally declares that he cannot now conceive of a crime that would be more heinous than to leave the dog.

The test is finished. Yudhishtira has refused Heaven for the sake of a dog, and the dog stands transformed into a shining god, Dharma himself, the God of Righteousness. The mortal is acclaimed by radiant multitudes, and seated in the chariot of glory, he enters Heaven in his mortal form.

Even now, however, the poet has not made clear all that is to be required of a perfect man elevated alone to a position of great glory. Yudhishtira, entering Heaven, beholds his enemies, the heroes with whom he has contended, seated on thrones and blazing with light. At this the soul of the emperor is mightily offended. Are the mere joys of the senses to be accepted by him, he argues in effect, as any equivalent for the delight of good company? Where his comrades are

will be Heaven for him—a place inhabited by the personages he sees before him deserves a very different name.

Yudhishtira, therefore, is conducted to a region of another quality. Here amidst horrors of darkness and anguish, his energy is exhausted and he orders his guide angrily to lead him away. At this moment sighing voices are heard in all directions begging him to stay. With him comes a moment of relief for all the souls imprisoned in this living pain of sight and sound and touch.

Involuntarily the emperor paused. And then as he stood and listened he realised with dismay that the voices to which he was listening were familiar. Here, in Hell, were his kinsmen and comrades. There, in Heaven, he had seen the great amongst his foes. Anger blazed up within him. Turning to the messenger, who had not yet left him—"Go!" he thundered in his wrath, "return to the high gods, whence thou camest, and make it known to them that never shall I look upon their faces again. What! evil men with them, and these my kinsfolk fallen into Hell! This is a crime! Never shall I return to them that wrought it. Here with my friends, in Hell, where my presence aids them, shall I abide for ever. Go!"

Swiftly the messenger departed, and Yudhishtira remained alone, with head sunk on his breast, brooding in Hell on the fate of all he loved.

Only a moment passed, and suddenly the scene was changed. The sky above them became bright. Sweet airs began to blow. All that had been foul and repulsive disappeared. And Yudhishtira, looking up, found himself surrounded by the gods. "Well done!" they cried. "O lord of men, thy trials are ended and thou hast fought and won. All kings must see Hell as well as Heaven. Happy are they who see it first. For thee and these thy kin nothing remain save happiness and glory. Then plunge thou into the heavenly Ganges and put away in it thy mortal enmity and grief. Here, in the Milky Way, put on the body of immortality and then ascend thy throne. Be seated amongst the



gods, great thou as Indra, alone of mortal men raised to Heaven in this thine earthly form!"

That process of spiritualising which we see at its moment of inception in the story of Daksha and Shiva is here seen at its flowering-point. Thoroughly emancipated from the early worship of cosmic impressiveness and power, the Hero of the Sky appears no longer as a great Prajapati, or Lord of Creation, nor even as the Wild Huntsman, slaying the winter sun, but entirely as a man, one of ourselves, only nobler. The Hindu imagination has now reached a point where it can conceive of nothing in the universe transcending in greatness man's conquest of himself. Yudhishtira shone amongst men in royal clemency and manly faithfulness and truth, even as now he shines amongst the stars. Whatever came to him he first renounced, and finally accepted on his own terms only. This was the demand that Buddhism, with the exaltation of character and detachment, had taught the Indian people to make of manly men. Greatest of all was the renunciation of the monk; but next to this, and a different expression of the same greatness, was the acceptance of life and the world as their master, not as their slave.

It cannot be denied that this story of Yudhishtira, with its subtlety of incident and of character-drawing, is thoroughly modern in tone and grasp. The particular conception of loyalty which it embodies is one that is deeply characteristic of the Indian people. To them loyalty is a social rather than a military or political virtue, and it is carried to great lengths. We must remember that this tale of Yudhishtira will be in part the offspring and in part the parent of that quality which it embodies and extols. (Because this standard was characteristic of the nation, it found expression in the epic. Because the epic has preached it in every village, in song and sermon and drama, these fifteen centuries past, it has moulded Indian character and institutions with increased momentum, and gone far to realise and democratise the form of nobility it praises. Would the Greek myths, if left to develop freely, have passed eventually



through the same process of ethicising and spiritualising as the Indian?) Is India, in fact, to be regarded as the sole member of the circle of classical civilisations which has been given its normal and perfect growth? Or must we consider that the early emergence of the idea of beauty and conscious effort after poetic effect supersedes in the Hellenic genius all that becomes in the Indian high moral interpretation? A certain aroma of poetry there cannot fail to be in productions that have engaged the noblest powers of man; but this in the Indian seems always to be unconscious, the result of beauty of thought and nobility of significance, while in the Greek we are keenly aware of the desire of a supreme craftsman for beauty as an end in itself.



# BUDDHA AND YASHODHARA



## BUDDHA AND YASHODHARA

Far away in Northern India stood the old capital of Kapilavastu. And there, on a day more than twenty-five centuries ago, the city and palace were filled with rejoicings, for the fact that the young prince Gautama was born. The king had given the usual handsome presents to the servants who brought the news, and to everyone who had done anything, however trifling, and now he was seated in an inner room, waiting anxiously while a group of wise men worked over papers, and books, and strange instruments, together.

What were they doing, do you ask? A very funny thing. They were reckoning the position of the stars at the little one's birth, and reading the story of his future life from them! Strange as this sounds, it is a very old custom in India, and is faithfully carried out to this day. This star-prophecy is called a man's horoscope. And I know Hindus who possess the names and horoscopes of their forefathers for thirteen hundred years back!

It took these wise men of Kapilavastu a long time to work out the horoscope of the young prince, for the promise that they read there was so extraordinary that they had to be very sure that they were all agreed, beyond the possibility of a mistake, before they announced it. At last they came and stood before the king.

"Well," said he anxiously, "will the child live?" "He will live, Maharaja!" replied the oldest of the astrologers.

"Ah!" said the king, "It is well." Knowing that, he could wait patiently for the rest. "He will live," repeated the wise man, taking up his tale, "but if this horoscope is cast aright, on the seventh day from now, mother, Queen Maya, will die. And that shall be the sign to you, O King, that your son is either to be the greatest monarch on earth, or, stung by the woes of men is to abandon the world and become a great



religious teacher." Then he handed over the papers to the father and withdrew with his companions.

"The Queen will die—a great king—or a religious teacher," these words echoed and re-echoed in the ears of the sovereign, as he sat alone and thought over the prophecy. The terrible event that was to be the sign scarcely seemed more awful to him than the picture that the last words conjured up—"A religious teacher"—a beggar—the words were one and the same. The king shuddered. But stay! The words had been "*Stung by the woes of men* he will abandon the world"—"My son shall never know the woes of men," said the father with determination, feeling that he could thus force him to the destiny that he preferred, that of a mighty conqueror.

On the seventh day the soul of Queen Maya passed away, even as the wise men had said. Every tenderness and care had been lavished on her during that last week, but to no purpose. On the day foretold, she went to sleep like a happy child and woke no more.

Then, amidst King Shuddhodhana's grief, there was an added feeling of anxiety, for he was sure now that the astrologers had told the truth, and he was determined to save his son from the fate of a beggar, when he might instead of that become the richest and most powerful sovereign in the world.

Those about the boy, as he grew up, could well believe that some wonderful future was in store for him. He was so bright and full of fun, so clever at books and games, and above all he would give so much love in a word or a glance that all who were near him grew devoted to him and he had no rivals. He was "full of pity," as they always said of him. He would nurse a broken-winged bird back to life with endless care; he could never bring himself to shoot dumb creatures for sport with his bow and arrows like his friends, the young nobles of Kapilavastu. He did not think it manly, he said, to rejoice in the pain and sorrow of the little brothers. So he knew the trouble that comes upon one who

is wounded by an arrow; but of no other kind of misery had he ever heard. His home was a palace. Round it lay a garden and this again opened into a great park, stretching many miles to the north of the capital in all directions. Outside these bounds he never passed as a boy. Here he could ride and practise archery, and wander for hours together, observing, thinking and dreaming. And here there was no sorrow, or none that spoke loudly to one who had never yet himself known suffering. The spot was a whole kingdom in itself. He never thought of travelling beyond its bounds. And his father forbade any to speak in his hearing of pain or death. So he did not even know that such things could be. For Shuddhodhana remembered always the words "*Stung by the woes of men,*" and from a knowledge of those woes he sought to guard his son.

The years of study for Indian youths ought to last till thirty. Then a man stands free. Now when the young Gautama drew near this age he might have chosen to leave his home for other countries. None could forbid—for he was now a man—not even the king. So at this point they sought to catch him, as it were, in a network of roses. They suggested to him that it was time to marry and settle down. They felt sure that it was now only a question of time. If he had a wife and children that he loved, about him, he would become involved in such a pressure of pleasure and of business that he would be unable to leave home, and for his children's sake he would wish to be richer and richer till he should become the richest and most powerful sovereign in the world, even as the wise men had said at his birth.

But Gautama was positive on one point. He must see his bride, and choose her for himself. So all the young nobles who had sisters were invited with them to spend a week at court; and morning after morning there would be games of skill, whirling of clubs or fencing or riding. And in the evenings plays or displays of juggling or serpent-charming were given in the palace-theatre, and all enjoyed the entertainments together.

There was one lady whom the king and his ministers and even these guests hoped that the Prince would choose. For her beauty and talents and birth were even more distinguished than those of others. And her name was Yashodhara.

But when the last day came and Gautama stood beyond the doors saying farewell to his guests and offering to each some splendid memento of her visit,—to one a necklace, to another a bracelet, to a third some beautiful gem,—he had nothing at all for Yashodhara, save a single flower which he took from his own cloak. And the onlookers understood from this neglect that he had made some other choice. And all, save the maiden herself, were very sorry. To her, that one blossom seemed more precious than all the jewels of her friends. And when next day, the King of Kapilavastu waited in person on her father to ask her in marriage for his son, it was scarcely a surprise to her. It seemed only strange that it should be so simple and natural. Perhaps she was already half-conscious of the long chain of lives behind them in which she had always been his wife.

But Yashodhara was one whose name drew many suitors. And honour demanded that Gautama should win her by proving himself, in open lists, the knightliest of all those who aspired to win her hand. Such was the custom of the royal caste. And with this stipulation, the prince's proposal was welcomed by the father.

Gautama was delighted with the reply, and challenged all rivals to enter the lists with him on the appointed day. "Alas!" said his relatives, "how will you, who have always refused to aim at the flying bird or escaping deer, succeed in hitting the revolving boar at a tourney? Or how can you stand a chance against great archers in drawing the gigantic bow?" But he gave no answer save laughter. Fear was unknown to him, and he found great springs of power within himself. When the hour arrived, his confidence was justified, for he distanced all competitors, carrying away every prize.

So came about the marriage of Gautama, the prince, with Yashodhara.

Their future home was made still lovelier than the old. A new palace, spanning a water-course, with great arches was built of rose-red stone and dark carved wood. At one end of the garden the leaping stream surrounded an island of white marble, on which was a suite of cool, white, summer-chambers, while numbers of fountains were concealed in the bed of the river to make waterspouts, when desired, all round the summer-house. And the window spaces were filled with fretted woods or perforated marbles, that there might always be air, shadow and privacy, and at the same time perfect ease to view the spreading lawns covered with fruit and blossom trees and flower-filled borders. In a corner of each royal hall, hung from the beams of the ceiling by great chains, was something like a cradle for two—it was a large cushioned swing, with three sides. Here, on hot days, one could swing and feel the movement of air cool about one, or recline idly while attendant maids or pages plied the fan. And the ladies and gentlemen in waiting, by whom the heirs to thrones must be surrounded, were chosen by a minister with scrupulous care, for their good looks and bright spirits.

Never a tear or a groan was to come within earshot of the prince. He was not to see illness or decay in any form. And if he desired to go into the city he was to be diverted from his purpose by fresh amusements and new pleasures. Such had been the strict orders of the king.

But none can turn back the page of destiny. Little did the king dream of the truth—that all his efforts would, when the right moment came, only add strength to the determination that he dreaded. This was not life in which his son was moving, but a play, a dream. Truth is better than any falsehood and sooner or later, the thirst for realities must awaken in the prince.

Even so it happened. One day Gautama ordered his chariot and bade the driver take him through the city that



lay beyond the walls—his own city of Kapilavastu, the capital of his future kingdom. The amazed charioteer obeyed. It was not his place to refuse. Yet he dreaded the anger of the king when he should know.

They went into Kapilavastu and that day Prince Gautama saw life as it really was, for the first time. He saw the little children at play in the busy streets. In the rows of open shops, called the bazaar, the merchants sat and bargained with customers about the goods that lay before them. The embroiderer and the potter and the brass-smith sat cross-legged on their counters, hard at work, while an apprentice would pull the string that worked the bellows hidden in the mud floor,—that the fire might burn up and heat the metal,—or turned the wheel for the potter's use. Up and down trudged the weary-looking carriers with the loads. Here and there a monk passed holding his long staff and glistening white with ashes. Ill-fed dogs snarled at one another over scraps of food, and scarcely moved even for the bullock-carts that trundled in from the country with their loads of fruit and grain and cotton.

There were very few women, and those not young, for the time was towards noon, and the morning bath was over. Yet a girl now and then passed them, perhaps, with her veil down and the great brass jar on her head, in which she was carrying water to her home.

But the streets were full of colour nevertheless, for part of the dress of men in the East is the shawl, or chudder, of brilliant hue, and woven of silk or wool, thrown across the left shoulder and brought under the right arm. Hence, in a town thoroughfare, though there is none of the musical tinkle of women's feet, there is abundance of pale-green and rose, of purple and yellow and turquoise blue, and the passing crowds are always bright to look upon. And Gautama turned to his charioteer and said, "I see here Labour and Poverty and Hunger—yet so much Beauty and Love and Joy are mingled with them,—surely in spite of them life is very sweet!"



He spoke musingly, as one in conversation with himself, and at the words, the Three Woes of Men—Weariness and Disease and Death—drew near to him. The great moment in Prince Gautama's life had come.

First came Weariness. It came as an old, old man, with bald head and toothless gums and trembling hands. There was no light in his blind and sightless eyes; there was no hearing in his ears. Weariness seemed to have made him into the grave of a man. Leaning on a crutch he held out a palsied hand for alms.

The prince leant forward and gave eagerly,—gave far more than the old man could have dreamt of asking. He felt as if his very soul were drowning. "O Chhandaka," he cried to his charioteer, "What is it? What is it? What ails him?"

"Nay," said Chhandaka soothingly, "it is nothing. The man is merely very old." "Old!" said Gautama, thinking of his father's grey hairs, and of the venerable ministers of state, "But old people are not all like this!"

"Yes," said the charioteer, "if they are only old enough."

"My father?" said the prince, though the words nearly choked him—"My father? Yashodhara? We ourselves here?" "All men," said the charioteer solemnly, "are subject to old age, and old age, if it goes far enough, will end always thus."

Gautama was silent, overwhelmed with horror and with pity. It was only for a moment, however, and there stood beside the chariot, one whose whole skin was covered with pale pink patches, terrible to see, and the hand that he held out had lost many of its joints. Most of us would have covered our eyes and hurried from the spot. But this was not the impulse of the prince—"My brother!" he said in rich tones, trembling with sympathy and reverence as he gave him a coin.

"It is a leper," said Chhandaka, as the man started in surprise at the gentleness of Gautama's voice. "It is a leper—let us drive on."

"And what is that, Chhandaka?" said Gautama.

"It is one who is overtaken by disease, Sire."

"Disease, disease, what is that?" said the prince.

"Sir, it is an ill that befalls the body, none knows how or why. It destroys comfort. It makes a man cold in the height of summer, or hot in the midst of mountain snows. One sleeps like a stone under its influence, another goes mad with excitement. In some cases the body itself drops to pieces little by little. In others it maintains its own form, but shrinks till the bones are visible. Yet again it swells and grows hideous in its size. Such is Disease. No man knows whence it comes or whither it is driven and none of us know when it may attack ourselves."

"And this is life—that life that I thought sweet!" said Gautama. He was silent for a while. Then he looked up. "How can men get out of life?" he said. "What friend have they to release them?"

"Death," said Chhandaka. "See! there come the bearers of the dead, carrying one to the river-side to burn."

The prince looked up, and saw four strong men bearing a low bedstead on their shoulders, and on the bed was stretched, with a white cloth over him, what looked like the form of a man. But he did not stir, under his coverlet, when a foot stumbled, and though the bearers cried, "Call on the Lord" at every step, he whom they carried made no movement of prayer.

"But indeed," the charioteer went on earnestly, "men do not love Death. It does not seem to them a friend—rather they think it a still worse enemy than old age or disease. It takes them unawares and they hate it and try to escape it with all their might."

Then Gautama looked closer at the solemn procession, as it passed. Some inner sight seemed to be opened to him, and he saw the reason why men hated Death. It was as if a long series of pictures passed before him. He saw that the dead man yonder had died many times before and always had been born again. He saw that being dead now, he would

surely come back into the world. "Of that which is born, Death is certain. Of that which is dead, Birth is certain," he said, "Lo, to the circling of life's wheel there is no beginning and no end, Chhandaka, drive home."

The charioteer turned as he was bidden, but the prince asked no more questions. He sat lost in thought. As they re-entered the palace, all that had seemed so beautiful in the past had become hateful to him—what were grassy lawns and blossoming trees and leaping water but so many toys that kept the child from caring to know the truth? For Yashodhara and he seemed to be children dwelling with their play-things in a garden made over the mouth of a volcano that might break out and destroy them at any moment. And what they were, all other men and women also seemed as such, only others had less reason than they to enjoy the game.

His heart has become, as it were, a great throbbing ocean of compassion for mankind, and not for man only, but for all those living things in whom he saw the power to love and suffer, though they were without human speech.

"Life and Death together are an evil dream," he was saying to himself, "how are we to break it and awake?"

So the Three Woes of men stung him even as the wise men had foretold at his birth, and he could neither eat nor rest. Towards midnight, when all the household was asleep, he rose and paced about his room. He flung open a fretted window and looked out into the night. A wind swept down upon the tops of the trees as he did so, and the earth seemed to shiver. It was really the voice of the great souls of the universe, crying, "Awake! Thou that art awakened! Arise! And help the world!" And the soul of the prince heard doubtless, and understood without translating into words. Then, as he stood looking out upon the stars seeking within himself some way to break the dream of life, so that a man could pass out of reach of the play of destiny,—as he sought thus, he remembered suddenly the ancient wisdom of his race. "Why!" he cried, "this must be the quest that calls

men to leave their homes and live in forests, covered with ashes! They must know something! That must be the way! I too will tread that road. But these never return to tell their wisdom. They keep it to themselves or share it only with the learned. I, when I know the secret, shall return and tell it to all mankind. The lowest of the low shall hear as much as the greatest. The way of salvation shall be open *to all the world.*" With these words, he closed the casement and stole to the bedside of his sleeping wife. Gently he drew the curtains back and looked upon her face. It was then that his first struggle began. Had he any right to leave her? He might never come back. Was it not a terrible and cruel thing to make a woman a widow? His little son, too, would have to grow up without a father's care. It was all very well to sacrifice oneself for the sake of the world, but what right had one to sacrifice another?

He closed the curtains and went back to the window. Then light came. He remembered how great and noble the soul of Yashodhara had always seemed to him. And he realised that she had her share in what he was about to do. The pain of her loss would make the sacrifice half hers and the glory and the wisdom half hers too.

He hesitated no longer. Again he went to say farewell. He drew the silken curtains and looked down once more. He dared not waken her and so he stooped, and gently kissed her foot. She moaned in her sleep and he withdrew.

Downstairs, he pushed the sleeping Chhandaka on the shoulder and bade him harness his chariot swiftly and in silence. Then they passed through the great gates stealthily and on the high road the horse broke into a quick pace, till the prince was many miles from his father's home.

As dawn broke, he stopped and dismounted. Then, one by one, he put off the robes and jewels of a prince,—sending them back by Chhandaka with loving messages as gifts to one and another—and assumed the garb of a beggar, the pink cloth and the ashes, the staff and begging bowl. Chhandaka prostrated himself before him with tears. "Tell



my father I shall return," said Gautama, turning with a brief farewell, to plunge into the forest.

Chhandaka stood on the spot where he had left him long after the prince was out of sight. Then, stooping with passionate reverence, he lifted the dust of the road where he had stood and put it on his own head, before turning the chariot homeward to take the news to the king.

For seven long years in the forest Gautama pursued his search. Then at last, meditating in the night, beneath a Bo-tree, he discovered the Great Secret and found all Knowledge. From that time, other names dropped from him and he was known as the Buddha, or Blessed One.

In that moment of supreme illumination, he learnt that the thirst for life was the cause of all wretchedness. By ridding themselves of desire men could attain to freedom. And he called Freedom by the name of Nirvana, and the life of struggle for it, he called the Way of Peace.

All this happened in the forest, at the place now known as Buddha Gaya, where stands to this day an ancient temple with a great Bo-tree beside it, and to be only second in descent from the sacred tree itself. And Buddha lingered there some days to think out many things, and then he left the forest and came to Benares, where he preached his first sermon in the Deer Park to five hundred monks. From this time, his fame went about and numbers of disciples began to join him: but by the first two merchants whom he met on their way to Kapilavastu he sent a message to Yashodhara and to his father that he was certainly coming home. Their joy was unbounded that at last they had heard from him. The old king would have liked him to make a royal entry, but when the crowds were gathered and the troops arranged about the gateway, with banners floating and horses neighing, a beggar clad from throat to foot in yellow and gathering food here and there amongst the people, happened to pass near the king's tent, and lo, it was he, his son, who had gone out in the night-time seven years ago and came back now the Buddha!



But he did not stop till he had passed within the palace and stood in his own rooms before his wife and son. Yashodhara also wore the yellow cloth! Ever since the morning when she wakened to learn that the prince had abandoned the world and gone to dwell in the forests, ever since that morning, she had done what she could to share his life. She had eaten only of roots and fruits. She had slept always on the floor of some roof or verandah. She had put away all ornaments and the garments of a princess.

And now she knelt reverently and kissed the hem of the left side of his garment. They said but little. He blessed her and went. And then, she seemed to waken from a dream. Hurriedly she called her boy—"Go, ask your father for your inheritance," she said.

"Mother, which is my father?" said the boy timidly, looking at the crowd of men with shaven heads wearing the sacred colour.

But she scorned to give any description. "Your father," she said, "is the lion yonder, that passes to the gate."

And the boy went straight up to him. "Father, give me my patrimony," he said. But he asked three times, before Ananda, chief of the disciples, said, "May I give?" And Buddha said, "Give!" And the yellow cloth was thrown about the lad.

Then they turned and saw the mother behind, veiled, but evidently longing to be with her husband. And the kind-hearted Ananda said, "Master, may a woman not enter the order? May she not be one of us?"

And Buddha said, "Nay, do the Three Woes not come to women as to men? Why should their feet also not tread the Way of Peace? My Truth and my Order are for all, yet this request, Ananda, was for you to make."

Then Yashodhara also was received into the Order and went to dwell near her husband in his garden, and so her long widowhood came to an end, and her feet also were set at last upon the Way of Peace.

# CRADLE TALES OF HINDUISM



TO  
ALL THOSE SOULS  
WHO HAVE GROWN TO GREATNESS BY  
THEIR CHILDHOOD'S LOVE OF  
THE MAHABHARATA

## PREFACE

IN the following stories, it may be worth while to point out, we have a collection of genuine Indian nursery-tales. The only discretion which I have permitted to myself has been that sometimes, in choosing between two versions, I have preferred the story received by word of mouth to that found in the books. Each one, and every incident of each, as here told, has one or other of these forms of authenticity.

To take them one by one, the Cycle of Snake Tales is found in the first volume of the Mahabharata. The story of Shiva is inserted as a necessary foreword to those of Sati and Uma. The tale of Sati is gathered from the Bhagavata Purana, and that of the Princess Uma from the Ramayana, and from Kalidasa's poem of *Kumara-Sambhava*, "The Birth of the War-Lord." Savitri, the Indian Alcestis, comes from that mine of jewels, the Mahabharata, as does also the incomparable story of Nala and Damayanti. In the Krishna Cycle, the first seven numbers are from the Puranas—works which correspond to our apocryphal Gospels—and the last three from the Mahabharata. The tales classed as those of the Devotees, are, of course, from various sources, those of Dhruva and Prahlada being popular versions of stories found in the Vishnu Purana, while Gopala and his Brother the Cowherd is, I imagine, like the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya, merely a village tale. Shibi Rana, Bharata, and the two last stories in the collection, are from the Mahabharata. Of the four tales classed together under the group-name "Cycle of the Ramayana," it seems unnecessary to point out that they are intended to form a brief epitome of that great poem, which has for hundreds of years been the most important influence in shaping the characters and personalities of Hindu women. The Mahabharata may be regarded as the Indian national saga, but the Ramayana is rather the epic of Indian womanhood. Sita, to the Indian consciousness, is its central figure.

These two great works form together the outstanding educational agencies of Indian life. All over the country, in every province, especially during the winter season, audiences of Hindus and Mohammedans gather round the Brahmin story-teller at

nightfall, and listen to his rendering of the ancient tales. The Mohammedans of Bengal have their own version of the Mahabharata. And in the life of every child amongst the Hindu higher castes, there comes a time when, evening after evening, hour after hour, his grandmother pours into his ears these memories of old. There are simple forms of village-drama, also, by whose means, in some provinces, every man grows up with a full and authoritative knowledge of the Mahabharata.

Many great historical problems, which there has as yet been no attempt to solve, arise in connection with some of these stories. None of these is more interesting than that presented by the personality of Krishna. In the cycle of ten numbers here given under his name, many readers will feel a hiatus between the seventh and eighth. Now about the year 300 B.C. the Greek writer Megasthenes, reporting on India to Seleukos Nikator of Syria and Babylon, states that "Herakles is worshipped at Mathura and Clisobothra (Krishnaputra?)." It would be childish to suppose from this that the worship of the Greek Herakles had been directly and mechanically transmitted to India, and established there in two different cities. We have to remember that ancient countries were less defined, and more united than modern. Central and Western Asia at the period in question were one culture-region, of which Greece was little more than a frontier province, a remote extremity. The question is merely whether the worship of Herakles in Greece and Phoenicia and of a Herakles (presumably known as Krishna) in India, does not point to some distant Central Asian progenitor, common to the two—a mythic half-man, half-god, strong, righteous, and full of heroic mercy, who leaves his impress even on early conceptions of Shiva, amongst Hindu peoples. to be transmitted in divergent forms, in long-echoing memories, to one and another of the Aryan peoples. If so, is the Krishna of the Return to Mathura, of the Snake Kaliya, of the Mountain and the Demons, the Indian version of this Central Asian Herakles?

We have thus to decide whether the Krishna of the Puranic stories here given, and the Krishna Partha Sarathi of the Mahabharata, are two, or one. On the answer to this depends a great deal of history. If they are two, is Krishna Partha Sarathi new at the time of the last recension of the Mahabharata, or is he some ancient hero of the Aryan peoples, with whom Krishna-Herakles is then fused, to become the popular vehicle of Vedic



ideas? In the hands of highly-trained Indian scholars—competent as no foreigner could be to apply the tests of language and of theological evolution—it is my belief that these inquiries might receive reliable solutions. I doubt that alien opinions could ever be much more than interesting speculations. But, in any case, the point of importance to our present purpose is that the story of his life, as here set forth, is that told to this day by the people amongst themselves.

My special thanks are due for the help afforded me in the preparation of this volume to the Hindu lady, Jogin-Mother (Yogin-Ma)—a kind neighbour, whose deep and intimate knowledge of the sacred literature is only equalled by her unfailing readiness to help a younger student—and to the Swami Saradananda of the Ramakrishna Math, Belur. The frontispiece, of “The Indian Story-teller at Nightfall,” and the Thunderbolt of Durga on the cover, are the work of the distinguished Indian artist, Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore.†

## NIVEDITA

OF RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA

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The Indian Story-teller at Nightfall

# CRADLE TALES OF HINDUISM

## THE CYCLE OF SNAKE TALES

*The Wondrous Tale of the Curse that lay  
upon the Snake-Folk: and first of the  
Serpent Realm, below the Earth*

IN the world of Eternity, below the earth, lies, as is known to all men, the realm of Takshaka, the Naga king, and about him dwell mighty snakes, hoary with age, and mysterious in power. And strange and beautiful is that Snake-world to see, though once alone has the eye of man been privileged to look thereon, even in the day when the youth Utanka, having been sent abroad on his teacher's service, and having eaten and drunk unwittingly of the nectar of immortality, was robbed of the tokens he carried by Takshaka, and followed him under the earth to recover them for his master.

For fearless and strong was the youth Utanka, disciple of mighty sages, and never was he known to flinch from danger or to turn back because the task was arduous. Passing through great hardships and many difficulties, he had fared forth to bring to his teacher's wife two jewels belonging to a certain Queen. "But mind," said his master at starting,



“and mind,” said the Queen, when she gave them, “these ornaments are greatly desired by Takshaka, King of Serpents. See that he rob you not of them by the way.”

With high resolve, then, did the youth set forth, to return to his preceptor, bearing the jewels of the Queen. But as he went by the road he saw a beggar coming towards him, who, as he came, constantly appeared and disappeared. Then being athirst, and coming to a spring, Utanka placed his casket by the roadside, and bent to drink: At that very moment, however, the strange beggar turned into the terrible Takshaka, and seizing the packet glided swiftly away. But immediately Utanka understood, and, no way dismayed, followed after him. Then Takshaka disappeared through a hole in the earth. Yet even here the mortal was resolved to follow; so he seized a stick, and proceeded to dig his way after him. And it came to pass that Indra, the King of Gods, looked on, and saw that though the youth was high-hearted yet his tool was not sufficient, and he drove the strength of his own thunderbolt into the stick of Utanka, till the earth itself gave way before the mortal, and he pressed forward through a winding tunnel, into the Serpent-world. And when the passage ended, he found himself in a beautiful region, infinite in extent, and filled with palaces and mansions and gardens. And there were towers and domes and gateways innumerable, and in the gardens were lawns and wrestling-grounds, and all manner of provision for games and sports.

And it came to pass as he went onwards, that he saw two women weaving at a loom, and their shuttle was fine, and their threads were black and white. And he went a little further, and came to a great wheel, and it had twelve spokes, and six boys were turning it. And further still he met a man clad in black, riding on an immense horse.

Now when he had seen all these things, Utanka knew that he had come into a world of magic. Therefore he began to recite powerful spells, and when the man who rode on the horse heard him, he said, “Tell me, what boon dost thou ask of me?” And Utanka replied, “Even that the serpents may

be brought under my control." Then said the man, "Blow into this horse." And Utanka blew into the horse. And immediately there issued from it smoke and flame so terrible that all the world of the serpents was about to be consumed. And Takshaka himself, being terrified for the fate of his people, appeared suddenly at the feet of the youth, and laid there the jewels he had stolen. And when Utanka had lifted them, the man said, "Ride on this horse and he will in an instant bear thee to thy master's door." And the heart of Utanka was satisfied with seeing, and he desired nothing so much as to fulfil his master's errand; therefore he leapt on the horse, and in one moment found himself in the presence of his teacher, offering to him the tokens for which he had been sent.

And now understood Utanka what he had seen in the world of Eternity, beneath the world of men. For the loom was the loom of Time, and the black and white threads were night and day. And the wheel with the twelve spokes was the Year with its twelve months, and the six lads were the six seasons. And the man clad in black was Rain, and the horse on which he rode was Fire; for only when heat is controlled by water is the world of the serpents ever in contentment. "And well is it for thee, my child," said his master to Utanka, "that thou hadst eaten and drunk of the divine nectar, for without this spell of immortality, know that no mortal ever before emerged alive from the realms of Takshaka." And the heart of Utanka rejoiced greatly, and also he desired much to find some means to put an end to the race of serpents, so full of mysterious danger to the sons of men. And he resolved to make his way to the King, and prevail upon him to undertake a warfare against them.

Now a strange and powerful curse lay upon the Snake-folk, and great fear dwelt therefore amongst them. Long, long ago, in the very beginning of time, it had happened that they increased very swiftly in numbers, and they were fierce and full of poison, and evermore at war with one another, and with the race of men. And the gods in high

heaven trembled lest the Snake-folk should end forever the young race of Men-folk. And at that time it happened one day that Kadru, the Mother of Snakes, called on her children to obey her in some matter, but they, being wilful and mischievous, at first refused. Then did the heart of the Mother wax strong; and full of anger, and thinking she spoke her own will, but really blinded by the fear that abode in the hearts of the gods, she opened her mouth and called down a curse on her own children. "All ye," she said, "shall perish in the fire-sacrifice that shall be made by Janamejaya, the great King!" Poor children! Poor Kadru! Surely never was anything so terrible as this, that the destruction of a whole race should be brought about by its own mother.

The awful prophecy was heard through all the worlds, and for a moment the kind gods were relieved that the race of the snakes was not to increase forever. But when they saw their distress, and when they looked also upon their beauty, their hearts were filled with pity, and they went all together to Brahma the Creator, and spoke before him of the fierceness of Kadru's anger against these dear children, the Snake-folk, and begged him in some way to soften her fearful spell. And Brahma granted them that the cruel and poisonous serpents alone should be consumed, while the others, gentle and playful and affectionate, should escape. And then very softly, so that one little snake alone was able to hear, having crept up to lie near the feet of the Creator, he whispered, as if to himself, a promise of redemption. In the lapse of ages, he said, a maiden should be born of the Naga race, who should wed with the holiest of mortal men. And of this marriage should be born in due course a son, Astika, whose love from his birth should be all with his mother's people, and he should defeat the doom that lay upon them.

Now when this promise was published abroad in the realms of Takshaka, that whole world was greatly comforted; and patiently, and yet sorrowfully, waited the Snake-folk, age after age. For they knew that their curse was

terrible, yet that it was provided in the counsels of the Creator that when their terror should be at its greatest, Astika the Redeemer also should be ready, and should arise to bid their sufferings cease.

## THE STORY OF THE DOOM OF PARIKSHIT

SILENT, silent, in the forest sat the Rishi Shamika. Long had he sat thus, motionless, in the shade of the huge trees, observing the vow of silence, and to no man would he speak, or return any answer. Only about his feet played the forest creatures, fearless and unharmed, and not far off grazed the cattle belonging to the Ashrama.

Now it happened one day while the Rishi was under the vow, that Parikshit, the King, came hunting through that very forest. And he was a great hunter and loved the chase. Neither had any deer, hunted by him, ever yet escaped in the woods with its life. But today the allure-ment of destiny was upon the King, so that he had been successful only in wounding a fleet stag which had fled before him. Thus, following on and on, and yet unable to overtake his quarry, he was separated from his retinue, and as the day wore on, came suddenly, in the remoter reaches of the forest, upon the hermit Shamika, sitting absorbed in meditation.

"Saw you a deer which I had wounded?" cried the King. "Tell me quickly which way it went!" His face was inflamed with eagerness, and his clothing and jewels displayed his high rank. But though the saint evidently heard his questions, he answered never a word.

Parikshit could hardly believe his own senses, that one to whom he addressed a question should refuse to answer. But when he had repeated his words many times, all the energy of the royal huntsman turned into bitter anger and contempt, and seeing a dead snake lying on the earth, he lifted it on the end of an arrow, and coiling it round the neck of the hermit, turned slowly about, to make his way homewards. It is said by some that ere the King had gone many paces, he realised how wrongly he had acted in thus



insulting some unknown holy man. But it was already too late. Nothing could now avert the terrible destiny which his own anger was about to bring upon him, and which was already creeping nearer and nearer to destroy.

To Shamika the hermit, meanwhile, insult and praise were both alike. He knew Parikshit for a great king, true to the duties of his order, and felt no anger at the treatment measured out to him, but sat on quietly, absorbed in prayer, the dead snake remaining as it had been placed by the hunter's arrow. And even thus was he still sitting, when his son Shringi returned from distant wanderings in the forest, and was derided by some of his friends and companions for the insult that the King had offered, unhindered, to his father.

Now Shringi's mind was of great power, fully worthy of Shamika's son. Not one moment of his time, not the least part of his strength, was ever wasted in pleasure. His mind and body, his words and deeds and desires, were all alike held tight, under his own control. Only in one thing was he unworthy, in that he had not the same command as his father Shamika over the feeling of anger. For he was apt to spend the fruits of long years of austerity and concentration, suddenly, in a single impulse of rage. Yet so great was he, even in this, that the words which he spoke could never be recalled, and the earth itself would assist to make good that which was uttered by him in wrath.

When, now, he heard the story of how the King, while out hunting, had insulted his aged father, the young hermit stood still, transformed with grief and anger. His love and tenderness for Shamika, his desire to protect him in his old age from every hurt, with his own strength, and his reverence for the vow of silence, all combined to add fuel to the fire of rage that seemed almost to consume him. Slowly he opened his lips to speak, and the words ground themselves out between his teeth. *"Within these seven days and nights, the life of the man who hath put this*

*shame upon my father, shall be taken from him, by Takshaka himself, the King of Serpents.*" A chill wind passed over the listening forests as they heard the curse, and far away on his serpent-throne the terrible Takshaka felt the call of the young sage's anger, and, slowly uncoiling his huge folds, began to draw nearer and nearer to the world of men.

Shamika's vow of silence came to end with his son's return. But when he was told of the curse just uttered, he was full of sorrow. "Ah, my son," he cried, "our King is a great king, true to the duties of his order and the common weal, and under his protection it is that we of the forest Ashramas dwell in peace, pursuing after holiness and learning. Ill doth it befit hermits to pronounce the doom of righteous sovereigns. Moreover, mercy is great, and forgiveness beautiful. Let us, then, forgive!"

The deep sweetness and serenity of the old saint flowed like a healing stream over the troubled spirit of his son, and tenderly Shringi stooped, to remove the unclean object from about his father's neck. But the words that had just been spoken had been too strong to be recalled, so when Shamika understood this he despatched a secret messenger to the King, to warn him of the danger that was hanging over him.

Then the King, Parikshit, having heard from the messenger that the Rishi whom he had insulted had been under a vow of silence, and hearing also that it was the sage himself who had sent him the friendly warning, was filled with regret for his own deed. Yet inasmuch as no sorrow could now avail to save him, without the utmost vigilance on his own part, he hastened to take counsel with his ministers. And a king's dwelling house was made, into which no living thing could enter unperceived; and the house was set up on a single, column-like foundation; and Parikshit shut himself into it, determined that, until the seven days and nights had passed, he would transact both business and worship within its shelter, and seek no pleasure outside.

But now the rumour of approaching disaster to the King began to go forth amongst his people. And as Takshaka drew near to the royal refuge, he overtook a Brahmin hurrying through the forest in the same direction as himself. Recognising the Brahmin as Kashyapa, the great physician for the cure of snake-bite, and being suspicious of his errand, Takshaka entered into conversation with him. He quickly found that it was even as he had thought. Kashyapa was hastening to the court, in order to offer his services in restoring the King, when he should be bitten according to the doom.

Takshaka smiled, and laying a wager with Kashyapa that he knew not how powerful his poison was, he selected an immense banyan tree, and rearing his head, struck at it with his poison-fang. Immediately the great tree, with all its roots and branches, was reduced to ashes lying on the ground.

But how much greater is healing than destruction! That wise Brahmin, not in the least dismayed, stepped forward, and lifting up his hands pronounced strange words, full of peace and benediction. And instantly the banyan tree began to grow again. First came the tender sprout, with its two seed-leaves, and then the stem grew and put forth fresh buds, and next were seen many branches, till at last the whole tree stood once more before them, even as it had at first been—a lord of the forest.

Then Takshaka offered great wealth and many treasures to that master of healing, if only he would desist from his mission and leave his King to die. And the Brahmin seated himself for awhile in meditation, and having learnt, in his heart, that the curse on Parikshit would really be fulfilled, since his destiny would thereby be accomplished, he accepted the treasures of Takshaka, and consented to remain behind. And the great serpent journeyed on through the forest alone, smiling to himself over the secret bonds of Fate, spun, as these are, out of a man's own deeds.

Safe in the royal refuge the King had passed six days and

nights, and now the seventh had come, nor as yet had any snake been so much as seen. For it is ever thus. Only when men have ceased to fear do the gods send their messengers.

Now, as the day wore on, the King's heart grew light, and towards the decline of the sun there came to the door of the mansion a party of strange fellows, who seemed to be forest-dwellers, bearing presents of fruits and flowers for the royal worship. And Parikshit being graciously disposed, received the newcomers, and asking not their names, accepted their offerings.

When they had gone away, however, the King, and his friends and his ministers who were seated about him, felt an unwonted hunger for the fruit that had just been brought, and with much laughter and mirth proceeded to eat it. And in that which was taken by Parikshit himself he saw, when he broke it open, a tiny copper-coloured worm with bright black eyes, but so small as to be almost invisible. At this very moment the sun was setting, and the seven nights and days of the doom were almost ended. Parikshit therefore had lost all fear, and began to regret having paid so much attention to the hermit's message. So, the infatuation of destiny being now fully upon him, he lifted the creature out of the fruit, and said to it playfully, "Unless you, O little maggot, be the terrible Takshaka, he is not here. Show us, therefore, what *you* can do!" Every one laughed at the sally, and even as the King, a week before, had placed a dead snake contemptuously on the Rishi's neck, so now, in the spirit of mockery, he lifted the insignificant worm to the same position at his own throat.

It was the last act of Parikshit. Instantly, challenged thus by the sovereign's own word, the seeming maggot changed its form before the eyes of the terrified ministers, becoming in one moment vaster and vaster, till it was revealed as the mighty serpent, Takshaka himself. Then coiling himself swiftly and tightly about the King's neck, and raising his huge head, Takshaka fell upon his victim with a loud hiss, and bit him, causing instant death.



## THE SACRIFICE OF JANAMEJAYA

Now the child Janamejaya succeeded to the crown of his father Parikshit, and wise counsellors surrounded his throne and ruled the kingdom in his name. And thus quietly passed the years in which the young man was growing to manhood. Far away in the forest, moreover, was growing up at this very time a strange and silent youth, by name Astika, whose father had been the holiest of mortal men, and his mother the sister of a king among the gentler tribes of Snake-folk. And Astika was a man, of the nature of his father, very saintly and lovable, and full of wisdom. But he had lived all his life in the snake-realm in the forest. For his father had gone away, leaving his mother, even before he was born. So all his heart was with his mother's people and with his childhood's home. Here, then, were the two children of destiny, both of the same age, both fatherless, both born to be world-changers—Janamejaya the King, and Astika the Snake-man, Brahmin, and saint. And those were the days of the power of Takshaka, the Mighty Lord of Serpents.

Now it came to pass, on a day when the young King Janamejaya had grown to manhood, that there came to him one whose name was Utanka, crying. "Avenge! avenge! the time is come! Visit on the great serpent Takshaka thy father's death." And the King began to ask eager questions as to why he was fatherless, and how his father, Parikshit, being the noblest of kings, had met his death. But when they told him the story of the hermit Shamika and his son Shrungi, and of the King's mansion built on a single column, and the copper-coloured insect concealed in a fruit, the mind of the young King put aside all the minor circumstances and fixed on the thought of the great Takshaka as the enemy of the royal house. And he began to brood over the duty of avenging the death of his father



and protecting the world of men from the enmity and mischief of the whole serpent race. And behold when the King's purpose had grown deep, he raised his head, and said to his court of priests and counsellors, "The time is come! now do I desire to avenge the death of Parikshit, my father, by causing Takshaka and all his people to be consumed together in a blazing fire, even as Takshaka himself burnt up my father in the fire of his poison. Tell me then, ye wise men, and tell me, ye my ministers, how may I proceed to carry out this vow?"

And lo, when these words were heard in the King's court, a shudder ran through all the world of the Snake-folk. For this was the moment fore-told in the curse that had lain from of old upon their race. Janamejaya was that king for whom the ages had waited. Now was the hour of their peril at hand, nay, even at the very door. And the Snake-princess began to watch for the right moment, when she must call upon her son Astika to arise and save her race. And because for the purpose of this vow had Janamejaya, the King, been born, therefore all power and all knowledge was found among his advisers. They questioned the scholars and consulted all the ancient books. And all was finally decided, as to the manner in which a royal sacrifice must be performed, for the purpose of burning up all the snakes including even the great Takshaka himself. All the preparations began accordingly. A piece of land was chosen and an immense altar built, and all the vessels and ornaments were brought together. A great army of priests was gathered, the fire was ready, and the rice and butter that would be thrown into the sacrificial fire were stored up. But when all things were ready, it began to be whispered that the altar-builders had noted certain omens which indicated that a stranger would come and bring about the defeat of the sacrifice. So when the King heard this he gave orders, before sitting down on his throne, that the gates were to be closed, and no stranger on any account to be admitted.

And now at last the sacrificial fire was lighted, and the priests, chanting together the proper texts and verses, began to pour the libations of clarified butter upon the flames. Oh how strange and terrible was the sight next seen! So great was the power of the minds that were concentrated upon the sacrifice, that from everywhere near and far away the snakes began to come, flying through the air, crawling along the ground, and dropping from the sky, to throw themselves of their own accord upon the fire. On and on they came, hundreds and thousands and even millions in number, writhing, struggling, and hissing in their terror; striving to resist the terrible power that was drawing them onwards; but all yielding to it and giving themselves to the fire in the end. And still the fires grew hotter and the flames brighter, and the chanting of the priests rose higher and higher; for their power must go out into the uttermost parts of the universe, and lay hold on the great Takshaka himself, to draw him into the consuming flames. Keenest and most intense of all their minds was that of the King. His face was dark and sombre, and his eyes never wavered as he sat there on his throne, following with all his strength the mighty spells that the priests were chanting, in order to bring Takshaka himself into their power, and drag him into the midst of the fire; for the royal passion of blood-revenge had awakened in him, and he thirsted for the life of his father's murderer. So the priests chanted, and the King watched, and far away the gate of the sacrificial grounds was held by a trusted officer, whose only fault was that he could never refuse to a Brahmin anything he asked.

Hour after hour the sacrifice went on. But now a strange murmur began to be heard. Takshaka, it was said, had fled from his own kingdom and found sanctuary in the throne of Indra, God of the Sky, and King of all the Gods.

"I care not!" cried Janamejaya, springing to his feet, with shining eyes. "For Takshaka there shall be no quarter. Let the throne of Indra itself fall into the fire and be burnt to ashes!" The earth was thrilled to her very core,

as, far up in the skies, appeared after these terrible words, a faint black spot, and all nature knew that the throne of the God of Heaven was being drawn into the sacrifice. Coiled tightly about it, and hidden by the robes of Indra, was Takshaka, and as long as he sheltered him, not even the King of Gods could resist the dread sentence thus pronounced by Janamejaya. Down and down, more and more swiftly through space, came the divine seat, and all eyes turned upwards, and all hearts seemed to stand still, as they watched it drawing nearer to the royal flames. Then there was a convulsive struggle, and the throne of the Sky-father was seen to be rising again into the heavens, while suddenly the great form of Takshaka himself became visible, falling slowly but surely to his doom.

At that very moment a strange yet noble-looking Brahmin came forward to the throne of Janamejaya, saying, "O King, grant me a boon!" The King held up his hand to silence him a moment. His eyes were fixed on the mighty serpent, whirling downwards through the air. Till he was sure of victory he would grant no boons, though the gods themselves should be the suppliants. But when Takshaka had drawn so close that his end was inevitable, he turned to the stranger, according to the royal custom, and said, "Speak! for whatsoever thou askest do I grant unto thee!"

"Then," said the Brahmin, "let this sacrifice be stayed!"

The King started forward in dismay. But it was already too late. Already had the snakes ceased to fall into the fire. Already was the body of the great serpent disappearing in the distance. And the priests, finding their texts become suddenly unavailing, had ceased to chant, or to pour the sacred butter into the fire. For even as the builders had prophesied, a stranger—no other than Astika, the Snake-Brahmin—had entered the sacrificial grounds during the ceremonies, and now, by the word of the King himself, had brought to nought the intention of the sacrifice. And this entrance of the Brahmin had been the one matter in which the King's officer at the gate had had no power to obey his

sovereign's orders. For, as was known to every one, the habit of his whole life had been, never to refuse to a Brahmin anything he asked.

But when Janamejaya had heard everything; when Astika had told him of the curse of Kadru that lay upon the Snake-folk, and the promise of a redeemer who should save all but the fiercest and most dangerous of his mother's people; when he told him, too, of his own birth for this very purpose; of the great fear and sadness that had fallen upon the Serpent-world at the commencement of the royal sacrifice, and of his mother's calling upon him, Astika, to save her kindred, then did anger and disappointment vanish from the heart of the King. He saw men as they really are, merely the sport and playthings of destiny. He understood that even the death of his father, Parikshit, by the poison of Takshaka, had happened, only in order to bring about the will of the gods. And he turned round to bestow on Astika rich presents and royal favours. But already was the mission of Astika ended among mortals, and he had withdrawn, unnoticed, from the court of the King, to spend the remainder of his days in the forests, among the kinsmen of his mother, in his childhood's home.



## THE STORY OF SHIVA, THE GREAT GOD

IN wild and lonely places, at any time, one may chance on the Great God, for such are His most favoured haunts. Once seen, there is no mistaking Him. Yet He has no look of being rich or powerful. His skin is covered with white wood-ashes. His clothing is but the religious wanderer's yellow cloth. The coils of matted hair are piled high on the top of His head. In one hand He carries the begging-bowl, and in the other His tall staff, crowned with the trident. And sometimes He goes from door to door at midday, asking alms.

High amongst the Himalayas tower the great snow-mountains, and here, on the still, cold heights, is Shiva throned. Silent—nay, rapt in silence—does He sit there, absorbed and lost in one eternal meditation. When the new moon shines over the mountain-tops, standing above the brow of the Great God, it appears to worshipping souls as if the light shone through, instead of all about Him. For He is full of radiance, and can cast no shadow.

Wrapped thus into hushed intensity lies Kailas, above Lake Manasarovara, the mountain home of Mahadeva, and there, with mind hidden deep under fold upon fold of thought, rests He. With each breath of His, outward and in, worlds, it is said, are created and destroyed. Yet He, the Great God, has nothing of His own; for in all these that He has created there is nothing—not kingship, nor fatherhood, nor wealth, nor power—that could for one moment tempt Him to claim it. One desire, and one alone, has He, to destroy the ignorance of souls, and let light come. Once, it is said, His meditation grew so deep, that when He awoke He was standing alone, poised on the heart's centre of all things, and the universe had vanished. Then, knowing that all darkness was dispelled, that nowhere more, in all the worlds, was there blindness or sin, He danced forward with



uplifted hands, into the nothingness of that uttermost withdrawnness, singing, in His joy, "Bom! Bom!" And this dance of the Great God is the Indian Dance of Death, and for its sake is He worshipped with the words "Bom! Bom! Hara! Hara!"

It is, however, by the face of the Great God that we may know Him once for all, beyond the possibility of doubt. One look is enough, out of that radiance of knowledge, one glance from the pity and tenderness in His benign eyes, and never more are we able to forget that this whom we saw was Shiva Himself. It is impossible to think of the Great God as being angry. He "whose form is like unto a silver mountain" sees only two things, insight and want of insight, amongst men. Whatever be our sin and error, He longs only to reveal to us its cause, that we may not be left to wander in the dark. His is the infinite compassion, without one shadow or stain upon it.

In matters of the world, He is but simple, asking almost nothing in worship, and strangely easy to mislead. His offerings are only Bel-leaves and water, and far less than a handful of rice. And He will accept these in any form. The tears of the sorrowful, for instance, have often seemed to Him like the pure water of His offering. Once He was guarding a royal camp at night, when the enemy fell upon Him, and tried to kill Him. But these wicked men were armed with sticks of Bel-wood, and as they beat Him again and again with these, He, smiling and taking the blows for worship, put out His hand, and blessed them on their heads!

He keeps for Himself only those who would otherwise wander unclaimed and masterless. He has but one servant, the devoted Nandi. He rides, not on horse or elephant, but on a shabby old bull. Because the serpents were rejected by all others, did He allow them to twine about His neck. And amongst human beings, all the crooked and hunch-backed, and lame and squint-eyed, He regards as His very own. For loneliness and deformity and poverty are passwords sufficient to the heart of the Great God, and He, Who

asks nothing from any one, Who bestows all, and takes nothing in return, He, the Lord of the Animals, Who refuses none that come to Him sincerely, He will give His very Self, with all its sweetness and illumination, merely on the plea of our longing or our need!

Yet is this not the only form in which Shiva may come to the soul of man. Sometimes the thing that stands between us and knowledge is unspeakably dear. Yet is the Great God ever the Destroyer of Ignorance, and for this, when our hour comes, He will arise, as it were, sword in hand, and slay before our eyes our best beloved. In the middle of His brow shines forth the great Third Eye of spiritual vision, with which He pierces to the heart of all hypocrisy and shams. And with the light that flashes from this eye, He can burn to ashes at a glance that which is untrue. For foolish as He may be in matters of the world, in spiritual things He can never be deceived. In this aspect, therefore, He is known as Rudra the Terrible, and to Him day after day men pray, saying, "O Thou the Sweetest of the Sweet, the Most Terrible of the Terrible!"

So runs the tale. And yet in truth this thought of the Great God is but half of that conception which is known to the intuition of man as the divine. Two things there are which we see as God. One is knowledge, insight—Jnana, as it is called in India—and this, carried to its utmost height, is Shiva or Mahadeva. But some see God rather in power, energy, beauty, the universe about us. Indeed, without both of these, either becomes unthinkable. Hence Shiva has ever a consort in Maha Shakti, the Primal Force. Amongst the pictures made, and the tales told, of Her, are those of Sati, and Uma, and the Great Death. She is Gouri, the Golden One, the fair, the light of the sunrise shining on the mountain snows. And she dwells ever in Kailas, as the wife and devoted worshipper of that Mahadeva, or Spiritual Insight, who goes amongst men by the name of Shiva, the Great God.

## SATI, THE PERFECT WIFE

LONG, long ago, in the beginning of time, there was a god called Daksha, who counted himself chief of divinities and men. And it happened once that a great feast was held, and all the gods at the banquet did homage to Daksha, and acknowledged him as Overlord, save one, Shiva. He, the Great God, was present also, and was clad indeed like any beggar, in ashes and pink loin-cloth, with staff and bowl. Yet He would not bow down and touch the feet of Daksha. His motive was pure kindness. We all know that there is nothing more unlucky for an inferior than to see one greater than himself prostrated before him. It is even said in India that if this occurs to you, your head will at once roll off. So out of sheer mercy to the Overlord, Shiva could not do homage, and probably afterwards forgot all about the occurrence. But the poor god did not understand His reason, and thenceforth counted Him his enemy, hating Him with all his heart. Now Daksha had had many daughters, but they were by this time all married, except the youngest, who was so good that she was known as Sati. (For the word *Sati* means *being*, *existence*, and nothing really, you know, exists but goodness!)

In secret Sati's whole soul was given up to the worship of the Great God. She adored the image of Shiva day after day, and offered before it water and white rice, praying that her whole life might be passed in loving Him, and Him alone.

In the midst of all this, Daksha declared that it was time for her to be married, and announced a Swayamvara, or feast of the Bride's Choice. Poor Sati! How could she marry any one else when her whole heart was given to the Great God? But the fatal day arrived. In a vast court, on splendid thrones, sat all the kings and gods who had been invited, in a great circle. Sati came in, with her wedding garland in her hand. All round she looked. She could tell which were gods,

because they were lighted from within, so they neither winked nor cast shadows, and which kings, for they did. Both were there, and she might choose any one of them. He would be happy, and her father would be glad. They glittered with jewels and were gay with gorgeous-coloured robes. Again and again she searched the place with her eyes, but He whom she looked for was not there. It was a terrible moment.

Then in her despair, Sati stood still in the midst of the hall, and threw her flowers up into the air, saying, "If I be indeed Sati, then do thou, Shiva, receive my garland!" And lo! there He was in the midst of them, wearing it round His neck!

Her father, Daksha, was choking with rage, but what could he do? The choice of a princess was final. So the wedding ceremonies had to be completed. When that was done, however, he called her to him. "Undutiful child!" he cried, "you have yourself chosen this beggar for your husband. Now go and live with him, a beggar's wife, but never come back to me or look upon my face again!"

So Shiva took her away to Kailas, and she was happier there than, in all the dreams and prayers of her girlhood, she had ever imagined. One day, however, the sage Narada, clothed in his pink robes and looking big with important news, came to call. He went up to Shiva, sitting on a tiger-skin, deep in meditation, and sat down near Him to have a chat. "H'm!" he said, as soon as he thought he had Mahadeva's attention, "your father-in-law, Daksha, is arranging for a fine festival. There's to be a fire-sacrifice with full state-ceremonies, and all his family are invited."

"That's good!" said Shiva, rather absently.

"But he hasn't asked you!" said Narada, eyeing him curiously.

"No," said Shiva; "isn't that fine?"

"What!" said Narada, beginning to look puzzled; don't you mind the insult, the terrible sacrilege, of offering royal worship without calling for the presence of the Great God?"



"Oh!" said Shiva wearily, "if only people would leave me out of everything, perhaps I could get rid of this burden of making and destroying worlds, and lose myself in one eternal meditation!"

Evidently it was impossible to get any fun out of a gossip here. Mahadeva was too grateful to His father-in-law for leaving Him in peace.

So Narada turned to tell the news to Sati. All her woman's curiosity was roused at once. A thousand questions had to be answered. She wanted to know about the preparations, and the guests, and exactly how the sacrifice and banquet were to be arranged. Finally saying, "But I must go too!" she turned to find her Husband, and Narada, feeling sure that events were afoot, hastened away.

Alone, in Kailas, Sati stood before Shiva. "I want to go and see the feast!" she said.

"But," said He, "you are not asked!"

"No daughter could need an invitation to her father's house!" pleaded Sati.

"Yes," said Shiva, "but you, My beloved, *must* not go. I fear for you the dreadful insults of those who hate Me."

Then, before the eyes of the Great God, the very face and person of Sati began to change. He had said "must" to her, and now she would show Him who and what she was, who loved and worshipped Him. So she assumed some of her great and terrible forms. She appeared to Him ten-handed, standing on a lion—Durga, the Queen and centre of the universe. She showed herself as the gentle foster-mother of the worlds. She became the black and awful Goddess of Death. Till Mahadeva Himself trembled in Her presence and worshipped Her, in turn, as His own equal. Then she was the tender and devoted Sati once more, pleading with Him as a mortal wife with her husband. "Even as you declare," she said, "we are about to go through terrible events. But these things must be, to show mankind what a perfect wife should be. Moreover, how could harsh words hurt Her, who bears all things and beings in Her heart?"



So He yielded, and she, attended by the one old servant, Nandi, riding on their old bull, and wearing the rags of a beggar's wife, set off for the palace of her father, Daksha.

Arriving there at last, and entering the Hall of Sacrifice, she—the young and beautiful Sati of a few short years before, still young and even more beautiful, but arrayed in such strange guise—was greeted by peals of laughter from the assembled guests. They were her sisters, resplendent in silks and jewels, each seated on the throne of her husband, on his left side.

There at the end of the hall, amongst priests and nobles, she saw Daksha about to begin the sacrifice. Sati went up and stood reverently before her father. When he saw her, however, Daksha became furious. "Ho, beggar's wife!" he said. "Why come you here? Did I not curse you, and drive you from my presence?"

"A father's curses are a good child's blessings," replied Sati meekly, stooping to the earth to touch his feet.

"Good children do not choose to marry beggars!" he replied. "Where is that husband of yours? Thief, rascal, evil dishonest daughter-stealer that he is!"

He was going on to say more, but even he could not finish, for Sati, blushing crimson, had risen to her full height, and her beauty and sorrow made her wonderful to look upon. One hand was raised, as if to say, "Hush!"

"Words such as these, my father," she was saying, "the faithful wife must not even hear. These ears that have listened are yours. You gave them to me, for you gave me life, and all this body. Then take it back. It is once more your own. Not for one moment shall I retain it, at the cost of such dishonour."

And she fell dead at Daksha's feet. Every one rose in horror, and the father himself stood as if turned to stone, aghast at the consequences of his own words. But there was no hope. The beautiful and faithful soul of Sati had indeed fled.

Then Nandi, her old attendant, set out swiftly for Kailas,

to report to Shiva what had happened. But as he did so, shaking in every limb, he turned round in the doorway and said, "If you, O Daksha, survive these deeds at all, may it be only with a goat's head on your human body!" In such great moments men see truly, even into the future.

Up in Kailas, Shiva was hard to waken from His meditation. But when at last He heard and understood what Nandi had to tell, His wrath and grief were without measure. Putting His hand up to His head He pulled out a single hair, and cast it on the ground before Him. Up sprang a giant, armed for war. Him Shiva made generalissimo of His hosts. Then He shook His matted locks, and out of them leapt a whole army of dwarfs, giants, and soldiers. These ranged themselves in order behind their leader, he behind Mahadeva, and all turned to march down upon the abode of Daksha.

When they reached it, the forces set to work, cutting off the head of the King and wrecking the palace. But Shiva made His way straight to the body of Sati, and taking it reverently on His shoulders would have left the place.

At this moment, however, came a woman, weeping and worshipping His feet. At length the sound of her voice penetrated to the ears of the grief-intoxicated God.

"Speak! Who worships Me?" He said.

"It is I, the mother of Sati!"

"Mother, what would you have?" said He very gently.

"Only that, of your mercy, you will give back the life of my husband, Daksha."

"Let him live!" said Mahadeva at once, and His servants obediently restored the life taken.

But Daksha had no head, and his own could not be found. "This will do very well," said the general of the army, pointing to the head of the goat that had been slain for sacrifice; and some one seized it and put it on the body of Daksha. So there he really was, even as Nandi had said, surviving, but with a goat's head on his human body.

But Shiva, bearing the body of Sati, strode forth in the

grief of a God. To and fro over the earth He went. His eyes shot forth volcanic fires, and His footsteps shook the worlds. Then Vishnu, to save mankind, came behind Shiva, and hurled His discus time after time at the corpse of Sati, till, falling piece by piece, with fifty-two blows it was at last destroyed, and Shiva, feeling the weight gone, withdrew to Kailas, and plunged once more into His solitary meditation.

But of how Sati was born again as Uma in the house of Himalaya the king, of how she strove once more for the love of the Great God; and of how Shiva, with His whole heart on Sati, refused to be won, and burnt Eros to ashes with a glance, are not these things told, by Kalidasa the poet, in his great poem of "The Birth of the War-Lord"?

## THE TALE OF UMA HAIMAVATI

Now Sati was born again on earth as the Princess Uma. In the divine regions, long periods of our time pass like a single day, and the years that were spent in becoming a baby and growing up into a woman seemed to Uma a very little thing. She knew well who she was, and remembered that she had come into the world only that she might win Shiva once for her own, and be with Him forever.

This time she had chosen as her father one who loved Mahadeva, and would feel deeply honoured by having Him for his son-in-law, Himalaya, the Mountain-king. Uma was extraordinary from her earliest years for her goodness. It was not only that every duty was faithfully performed, and those rites of purification that Shiva loves carried out to the last letter, but such long hours were spent in worship and in fasts of terrible rigour, that her mother often implored her to stop, fearing that she would lose health, or even life itself. But the Princess persisted, for she knew that beautiful as she was, her great difficulty in this life would be to make Shiva forget Sati long enough even to look at her. She must therefore devote all her energy to the training of soul and will. Notwithstanding this, however, she grew daily more and more lovely. And this was not surprising, as you would say, if you could have seen those wonderful mountains that were her home. There the dark cedars toss their heads all night long against the sky, and wild roses and red pomegranate blossoms fill the summer with their beauty. There graceful trees and delicious fruits abound, and wild flowers bloom in profusion. There birds and beasts give thanks continually that they exist, and on the rugged mountain-tops the snows are as grand as the forests below are beautiful.

With eyes and ears always filled thus, what could a maiden do but drink in loveliness and draw closer to its spirit day by day?

But greatest of all her charms was that pale golden tint of skin that is so admired by Hindu women. Indeed, she was so renowned for this, that to this day only queens in India may wear anklets and ornaments of gold upon the feet. Subjects wear silver, because yellow is Uma's own colour, and to touch it with the foot is sacrilege.

Now when Uma was about eighteen, all the gods became as anxious as herself for the granting of her desire. Their interest in the matter came about in this way: Sometime before, Brahma, the Creator, had shown great favour to one of the demons, and granted him an unusual degree of power. In the strength of this gift the recipient had greatly exalted himself, and was threatening to usurp the thrones of all the lesser divinities. They appealed to Brahma, and told their story. The great four-headed Father listened to their woe, and smiled indulgently. "I cannot myself avenge your wrongs," he said, "upon one who has received my friendship. Do you not know the proverb, 'Even a poisonous tree should stand uninjured by him who planted it?' But as I look into the future, I see that when Shiva marries the Princess Uma—and He can wed no other—He will become the father of a son who shall lead the armies of heaven to victory. Do what you can, therefore, to hasten the marriage. You are thereby bringing nearer the birth of the Divine War-Lord."

The thunder-like voice of the Creator died away in space, and the gods consulted as to what could be done. In the end, Indra, chief of the lesser gods, went to visit Madana, the Indian God of Love.

He and his wife Rati had, living in their home, a faithful friend and soldier called Spring, and all three listened to the request that Indra had come to make. He wished Madana to shoot one of his invisible arrows into the heart of Shiva.

The tall and graceful young god turned pale when he understood at last what was wanted. It was believed in the divine world that the Great God was proof against mortal weakness, and the impertinence of attempting to inflict on Him the wound of human love was almost too much, even



for these merry-hearted souls. They feared failure, and discovery, with the anger of Mahadeva.

Yet they had a strong affection for Indra, the God of the Sky. They owed him much. They were eager to serve him. At last said Madana, "If Spring will go before, and help me, as he has always hitherto done, I am willing to try," and this promise being extorted, Indra arose and left them; but he told them first of the grove in which Shiva would be found.

Now when Madana set forth to find Mahadeva, Spring went before. At his approach and the waving of his wand, all the trees in the forest broke into blossom without ever a green leaf. Then entered Madana, with his beautiful wife, Desire, and the world became warm with the friendship of the creatures. Birds warbled to each other, the wild deer drank out of the forest pools side by side: the hum of insects rose on the breeze; even the flowers seemed to pass under the gracious influence, and bend buds and bells a little nearer.

On came the Archer, Love, in the footsteps of his friend, till, near the heart of the wood, he found what he sought—a magnificent old cedar, and spread beneath its shade a black leopard-skin for meditation. The next moment an old man appeared, and held up his hand, saying, "Hush!" It was Nandi. Instantly, perfect silence fell upon everything. The forest stood as if painted on the air. No breeze stirred a single leaf. The birds remained on the boughs, with throats opened to sing, but no sound came forth. The insects hung on the wing motionless, and the bees, drawing near to sip honey from the flowers of Madana's bow, made a thick line like a black arch above it, or covered the quiver, made of blossoms, like a veil, as still as death.

Then Madana saw a white form shine forth and take shape beneath the cedar. It was Shiva Himself, whom he awaited. Motionless, under the tree, sat the Great God, lost in His reverie. In the middle of His forehead was a faint black line, like a wrinkle, but slightly tremulous. And Madana's heart beat faster, for he realised that this was the great

Third Eye of Mahadeva, capable of flashing forth fire at any time, and he knew not when it might open. Here was the opportunity that he wanted, but even now he dared not shoot, since there was none near by on whose behalf to awaken love. Gradually, however, the forest was returning to life from the long swoon imposed on it by Nandi, and as it did so, the very helper that Madana needed came in sight, for the most beautiful girl that he had ever seen entered the wood. Her manner and bearing were royal, and she wore the silken robe of prayer. It was Uma, the Princess of the Mountains, come to offer her morning worship to Shiva.

The slender form of the young Archer was hidden amongst the trees as she passed on to the feet of the Great God. Absorbed in His presence, she knelt before Him, and He opened His eyes and smiled upon His worshipper.

At this moment the audacious Madana drew his bow and made ready to take aim. Scarcely a second was it, yet the thought entered the mind of Mahadeva that the lips of this maiden were very red, and then, ere the idea was fully formed, a mighty wave of horror swept over Him, the great Third Eye had opened and sought the source of the vain impulse, and where the too venturesome god had been on the point of sending forth his dart, lay now, only a handful of ashes, in the form of a man.

A second later the luminous figure of Shiva had faded out from beneath the cedar, and Uma knelt alone to make her offerings.

But the grove was filled with the voice of lamentation. Desire, the beautiful wife of Love, was not to be consoled, that one flash of anger had not destroyed her with Madana. And she called on Spring, as her husband's friend, to build the funeral-fire in which she might die and follow him. At this moment, however, the voice of Indra rang through the wood. "Sweet lady!" it pleaded, "do nothing rash! It is true that you are separated from your husband for a while. But in a few months the work he began here will be completed, and when Mahadeva weds Uma, He will of His free grace

restore the life of Madana also. Only wait patiently” And Spring prevailed upon Rati to rely on the promise of Indra and wait.

[True enough, certain months afterwards, the spirit of her husband was given back to her. But his body had been destroyed. So, since then, walks Love invisible amongst men and gods.]

And Uma, left alone in the forest, realised that all her beauty had failed to prevail upon her Husband to forget her as Sati for one moment. Now, therefore, she must make a stronger appeal, and of a strangely different kind.

Then she left her princely home and went away to a hermitage, far from the dwellings of men, to live. A rough grass girdle and the covering of birch-bark became all her clothing. She slept on the bare earth, in the little time when she was not telling the name of Shiva on her beads, and her right arm grew marked and worn with the constant pressure of her rosary. Her hair was matted, and for food she seemed to take no thought.

How long this course of life had lasted, she herself knew not, when one day a Brahmin beggar passed that way, and stopped at her door to beg for food.

Uma, always pitiful as a mother to the needs of others, though she appeared to have none of her own, hastened to give him alms. But when he had received her dole, the beggar seemed desirous of lingering awhile to chat.

“Lady, for whose sake can you be practising such a course of penance?” he asked. “You are young and fair. Methinks this is the life of one old or disappointed that you lead. Whose love draws you to live thus?”

“My heart,” she replied, “is all for Shiva.”

“Shiva!” said the beggar, “but surely He is a queer fellow! Why, He seems to be poorer than poverty, and dreamer of dreams. I trust indeed, Lady, that your heart is not given to that madman!”

“Ah,” said Uma, sighing gently, “you speak thus because you do not understand! The actions of the great are often

unaccountable to the common mind. The ways of Mahadeva may well be beyond your ken!"

"But," he persisted, "believe that I speak wisdom! Spend your life no longer in a vain effort to reach One who is not worthy of your love. Give up the thought of Shiva. Even if He be what you say, He does not deserve——"

"Stop!" said Uma, "I have let you speak too long. I cannot listen to one word more," and she turned to go.

She was just lifting her foot, had not yet quite turned her eyes away, when a strange change began to steal over the Brahmin's features, and the Princess Uma, watching it, stood rooted to the spot. She held her breath. Surely there must be some mistake. Indeed, she could not believe her eyes. But at last she had to believe. For fasts and vigils had done what beauty alone could never have accomplished. The Brahmin who stood before her was none other than—Mahadeva Himself.

## SAVITRI, THE INDIAN ALCESTIS

THERE are few of the Greek stories that we love so much as that of Alcestis. Every one remembers how Admetus, her husband, was under a curse, and unless one could be found to die for him, he must, on a certain day, give up his life and betake himself to the dark realms of Pluto. And no one can forget that there was one to whom death seemed a little thing to suffer, if only thereby Admetus might be saved. This was his wife, Alcestis. So she, the brave woman-heart, left the light of the sun behind her, and journeyed alone to the under-world and the kingdoms of the dead.

Then was there sorrow and mourning in the halls of Admetus, until evening, when, as we all know, there came thither a guest whose strength was beyond that of mortals, and whose heart was open to the sadness of all. And he, the mighty Herakles, taking pity on the sorrow of Admetus, went down into Hades, and brought forth the soul of the faithful wife. Thus was the curse removed, and Death himself vanquished by men. And Alcestis dwelt once more with her husband Admetus, and after many years, as ripe corn into the garner, so passed they away, and were both together gathered to their fathers.

In this story we learn a great deal of the thought of the Greeks about women. We learn that they knew that woman, though usually so much weaker than man, and needing his protection, could yet, in the strength of her love for another, become brave as a lion, and face dangers gladly from which a man might shrink in terror.

In India also, amongst her gentle white-veiled women, with all their silent grace, there is the same courage, the same strength. There also it is known that a timid girl—a very daughter of men, not like Sati or Uma, some divine personage veiled in flesh—though utterly unaccustomed to the touch of the rough world, will become suddenly brave



to protect another. The Indian people know that there is no darkness that a true wife will not enter at her husband's side, no hardship she will not undertake, no battle that on his behalf she will not fight. And yet their story of the ideal woman is curiously different from this of Alcestis. Different, and at the same time similar. Only listen, and you shall judge for yourselves.

Beautiful and gifted—was the royal maiden, Savitri. And yet, at the mention of her name, the world thought only of her holiness. She had come to her parents as the Spirit of Prayer itself. For the marriage of her father Ashwapati and his Queen had for many years been blessed with no children, which thing was a great sorrow to them. And they were now growing old. But still, daily, the King lighted with his own hands the sacrificial fire, and chanted the national prayer *Savitri*, and begged of the gods that even yet he might have a child. It was in the midst of his worship one day, as he sang *Savitri*, and brooded deep on the divine will, that suddenly in the midst of the fire, he saw the form of a woman, that very goddess who was guardian spirit of the Indian prayer, and she blessed him and told him that his wife and he would yet have a daughter, whose destiny was high and whose name was to be that of the prayer itself. Thus, out of the devotion of two royal lives, was born the Princess Savitri.

Oh how good she was, and at the same time how strong! Full of gentleness and pity, there was yet nothing wavering or foolish about her. True to every promise, faithful to all who were in need, fearless and decided when difficult questions came up, she was a comfort to her parents and to all their people.

At last her father began to feel that it was time to think of her marriage. She was now seventeen or eighteen, and as yet no proposal had been made for her hand. Nor had her parents any idea to what prince to send the cocoanut on her behalf, as hint that a princess waited for his wooing. At this point, however, Savitri herself made a suggestion. Before

making any attempt to arrange the marriage, let her go on a long pilgrimage; pray at one holy shrine after another; take the blessings and listen to the words of many holy men; enter deep into communion with her own Guardian Spirit; and on her return, if no direction had been vouchsafed her, it would still be time enough to deal with the question of her marriage. For these things are guarded by destiny, and it is not well to meddle hastily with high matters. Every one thought this idea admirable. To some of her father's councillors it may have seemed that in this way Savitri would receive an education fit for a great queen. She would see the country and do homage to its holy and learned men. Others may have thought of the advantages in health and beauty. But to her parents it seemed that even as she had come to them, so also she would enter her husband's home, out of the very heart of prayer.

So great preparations were made. Grey-headed old courtiers were told off to watch over the Princess, and numbers of servants were sent to attend on her. She was to drive in a carriage, gilded all over, and surrounded by curtains of scarlet silk, through which she could see everything without being seen. And a long train of men and elephants were to follow, bearing tents and furniture and food, as well as a palanquin for Savitri to use, instead of the car, when she should be travelling in the forest. They started early one night when the moon was new, that they might cross the hot dry plain in the dark hours, and reach the forests before day. The Princess had never gone so far before. She had wandered about the royal gardens all her life, and she had driven about the city and parks in a closed carriage. But this was quite different. She was setting off on an adventure, alone, free. She felt that she was being led somewhere. Every step was the fulfilment of a delightful duty. It was her first long separation from her father and mother. Yet she was happy, and the tossing trees and howling jackals and midnight sky filled her with joy, even at moments when the torch-bearers, at the head of the train, were startled at

the roar of a tiger in the jungle. On such a journey the starlit night becomes like a great mother-heart, and one enters it, to listen to a silence deeper than any voice.

The march had lasted till long after daybreak, when they reached the edge of a forest beside a stream, where Savitri could bathe and worship, and cook her own simple meal. They stayed there the rest of that day, and resumed their pilgrimage early next morning.

This life continued for many months. Sometimes they would encamp for a whole week within reach of a certain hermitage. And Savitri would enter her palanquin every morning and have herself carried before the hut of the holy man, to offer gifts and request his blessing. Then she would sit on the ground before him, closely veiled, ready to listen if he chose to speak, but if not, content only to watch, since blessed are the eyes that look upon a saint.

And all the time she was drawing nearer and nearer to the great day of her life, that was to make her name dear to womanhood throughout the ages.

Journeying one day in the forest she saw, through the curtains of her litter, a tall, strong young man. There was something about him that made her hold her breath. Across one shoulder he carried an axe, and in his other hand he held a bundle of faggots. He was evidently a forester. Yet his bearing spoke of courage and gentleness, and the courtesy with which he helped some one of her train, and then stood aside for them to pass, told of high breeding and great gentlehood of heart. Inquiries were made as to the name and parentage of this young man. And then the Princess and her train turned homewards. For Savitri knew that today her destiny was come upon her. Here stood that soul to whom through endless births she had been united. He might be a forester or he might be a king. In any case she, with her mind's eye cleansed by pilgrimage and prayer, had recognised him to whom in all her past lives she had been wife, and she knew that what had been should again be. Here was he whom she should wed.

Ashwapati was in his hall of state, when at last his daughter entered his presence. Savitri would have liked to see her father alone, but beside him sat the holy man Narada, clad in his pink cloth, and the King bade her speak freely before him. "Has my child determined where she will bestow herself?" he asked gently, when the first warm greetings were over.

Savitri flushed crimson as she replied.

"Tell me all about this youth," said Ashwapati the King eagerly.

"In a certain woodland, my father," said the Princess timidly, "we met a young man who is living the life of a forester. His father is a blind king who has been driven from his throne in his old age, and is living in the forests in great poverty. This youth have I determined to marry. He is gentle, and strong, and courteous, and his name is Satyavan."

As soon as Savitri had begun to describe her choice, Narada had looked startled and interested. But now he held up one hand suddenly, saying, "Oh no! not he!"

Ashwapati looked at him anxiously. "Why not?" he said. "My daughter has wealth enough for two."

"Oh, it is not that!" said Narada; "but if Savitri weds this youth she will certainly become a widow, for Satyavan is under a curse, and twelve months from this day he is doomed to die!"

The Princess had grown very pale. For every Hindu woman prays to die before her husband. But when Ashwapati turned and said to her, "This is sad news, my daughter! You must choose again", she said, "No, my father. One gives one's faith but once. I cannot name a second as my husband. It is sad to be a widow, but having taken Satyavan, I must face whatever comes to me with this husband of my choice."

Both the King and Narada felt that these words were true, and messengers were sent next day, bearing a coconut from Ashwapati to the young Prince dwelling in the



forest. This meant that the King desired the youth to marry his daughter, and Satyavan and his parents gladly accepted, with the one stipulation that Savitri should come and live in their home, instead of taking her husband away from them in their old age.

So the wedding was proclaimed. The fire was called to witness their union. The iron ring was bound on Savitri's left wrist, and Satyavan and she had the veil and cloak knotted together, and hand in hand walked seven times around the sacred fire, while the priest at each circle chanted the ancient prayers of their people that that stage of life might be blessed to them both. Then they went away into the forest to live, and Savitri put away all the robes and jewels of a princess, and set herself to be a faithful and loving daughter to her new parents. Only she could never forget the terrible doom that had been pronounced upon her husband, and she never ceased to bear in mind the secret date on which Narada had said that he would die. For Yama, the God of Death, is the only being in all the worlds, perhaps, who never breaks his word, and "as true as Death" has become such a saying in India, that Yama is held to be also the God of Truth and Faith.

This was the thought that made poor Savitri's heart beat fast. She knew that there was no hope of the curse being forgotten. She could see quite plainly, too, that no one but herself knew anything about it. It remained to be seen whether she could find a way to save her husband or not.

The dreadful moment drew nearer and nearer. At last, when only three days remained, the young wife took the terrible vow that is known as the *three vigils*. For three nights she would remain awake, in prayer, and during the intervening days she would eat no food. In this way Savitri hoped to reach a state of the soul where she could see and hear things that commonly pass unknown to mortals.

The blind King and his aged Queen implored their new daughter to relax this effort, but when she made the simple answer, "I have taken a vow," they could say no more. In



that case her resolution was sacred, and they could only help her to carry it out. At last the fourth morning dawned, but still Savitri would not touch food. "No," she said, "it will be time enough at nightfall. Now I ask, as the only favour I have yet begged, that you should allow me also to go out into the jungle with your son, and spend the day." She was careful not to mention Satyavan's name to his parents, for that would have been forward and ill-bred. The old couple smiled gently. "The girl is a good girl," they said to one another, "and has yet asked for nothing. We certainly ought to allow her to go. Satyavan, take thou good care of our daughter." At these words Savitri touched their feet, and went out with her husband.

She had calculated that the blow would fall at midday, and as the hour drew near she suggested that they should stop in a shady spot and wander no further. Satyavan gathered grass and made a seat for her. Then he filled her lap with wild fruit; and turned to his work of hewing wood.

Poor Savitri sat and waited, listening breathless for the strokes of his axe upon the trees. Presently they rang fainter and feebler, and at last Satyavan came tottering up to her, with the words, "Oh, how my head pains!" Then he lay down with his head on her lap, and passed into a heavy swoon.

At this moment the wife became aware of a grim and terrible figure advancing towards them from the jungle. It was a stately personage, black as night, and carrying in one hand a piece of rope, with a noose at the end. She knew him at once for Yama, God of Truth and King of the Dead.

He smiled kindly at Savitri. "My errand is not for you, child!" he said to her, stooping at the same time and fixing his loop of rope around the soul of Satyavan, that he might thus drag him bound behind him.

Savitri trembled all over as he did this, but when the soul of her husband stood up to follow, then she trembled no longer. She also stood up, with her eyes shining and her

hands clasped, prepared to go with Satyavan even into the realms of Death.

"Farewell, child," said Yama, turning to go, and looking over his shoulder; "grieve not overmuch! Death is the only certain guest."

And away he went, down the forest-glades. But as he went, he could distinctly hear behind him the patter of feet. He grew uneasy. It was his duty to take the soul of Satyavan, but not that of Savitri. What was she doing now? Could she be following him? Why, in any case, had she been able to see him? What power had sharpened her hearing and cleared her sight? To most mortals, Death was invisible. Patter! patter! Yes, that certainly was a footfall behind him. Foolish girl! Was she striving to follow her husband? She must go home sooner or later. Still he would try to soothe her grief by gifts. "Savitri," said Yama, suddenly turning round on her, "ask anything you like, except the life of your husband, and it shall be yours. Then go home."

Savitri bent low. "Grant his sight once more to my father-in-law!" she said.

"Easily granted!" said the Monarch of Death. "Now, good-bye! This is not the place for you."

But still the footsteps followed Yama. The forest grew denser and more gloomy, yet wherever he could go, Savitri seemed to be able to follow.

"Another wish, child, shall be yours!" said Yama. "But you *must* go!"

Savitri stood undismayed. She was beginning to feel herself on good terms with Death, and believed that he might give way to her yet. "I ask for the return of my father-in-law's wealth and kingdom," she answered now.

"It is yours," said Yama, turning his back. "But go!"

Still the faithful wife followed her husband, and Yama himself could not shake her off. Boon after boon was granted her, and each time she added something to the joy of the home in which she had not yet passed a year. At last Death himself began to notice this.

"This time, Savitri," he commanded, "ask something for yourself. Anything but your husband's life shall be yours. But it is my last gift! When that is given, you are banished from my presence."

"Grant me, then, that I may have many sons, and see their children happy before I die!" said Savitri..

Yama was delighted. So Savitri was willing to flee from him, he thought! "Of course! Of course! A very good wish!" he said.

But Savitri was standing still before him, as if waiting. "Well," he said, "have I not granted it? That is all."

At these words Savitri raised her head and smiled. "My Lord," she said, "a widow does not remarry!"

The dread King looked at her for a moment. As God of Death, how could he give up the dead? But as God of Truth, could he urge Savitri to be untrue? A moment he hesitated. Then he stooped and undid the noose, while the whole forest rang with his laughter.

"Peerless amongst women," he said, "is that brave heart that follows the husband even into the grave, and recovers his life from Yama himself. Thus do the gods love to win defeat at the hands of mortals."

An hour later, under the same tree where he had swooned, Prince Satyavan awoke, with his head on Savitri's knee. "I have had a strange dream," he murmured feebly, "and I thought that I was dead."

"My beloved," answered Savitri, "it was no dream. But the night falls. Let us hasten homewards."

As they turned to go, the jungle rang with the cries of a royal escort, who had come out to seek them. For that very day, Satyavan's father had received word of the restoration of his kingdom, and the life of hardship and poverty was behind them all forever.

## NALA AND DAMAYANTI

ONCE upon a time there was a king named Nala, who ruled over a people known as the Nishadas. Now this Nala was the first of kings. In person he was strong and handsome, full of kingly honour, and gracious in his bearing. He loved archery and hunting, and all the sports of monarchs. And one special gift was his, in an extraordinary degree, the knowledge, namely, of the management of horses. Thus in beauty, in character, in fortune, and in power, there was scarcely in the whole world another king like Nala.

If there were one, it could only be Bhima, King of the Vidarbhas, a sovereign of heroic nature and great courage, deeply loved by all his subjects. Now Bhima had three sons and one daughter, the Princess Damayanti. And the fame of Damayanti, for her mingling of beauty and sweetness, and royal grace and dignity, had gone throughout the world. Never had one so lovely been seen before. She was said to shine, even in the midst of the beauty of her handmaidens, like the bright lightning amidst the dark clouds. And the hearts of the very gods were filled with gladness whenever they looked upon this exquisite maiden.

It happened that constantly before Damayanti, the minstrels and heralds chanted the praises of Nala, and before Nala those of Damayanti, till the two began to dream of each other, with an attachment that was not born of sight. And Nala, conscious of the love that was swakening within him, began to pass much of his time in the gardens of his palace, alone. And it came to pass that one day he saw there a flock of wild swans with golden wings, and from amongst them he caught with his hands one. And the bird was much afraid, and said, "O King, slay me not! Release me, and I will go to Damayanti and so speak to her of thee, that she will desire to wed thee, and no other in the world!" Musing, and stroking the wings of the swan, Nala heard his words,



and saying, "Ah, then do thou indeed even so!" opened his hands, and let him go free.

Then the swans flew up and away to the city of the Vidarbhas, and alighted in the palace gardens before Damayanti and her maidens. And all the beautiful girls scattered immediately, to run after the fleeing birds, trying each to catch one. But that after which Damayanti ran, led her away to a lonely place, and addressed her in human speech. "Peerless amongst men, O Damayanti!" it said, "is Nala, King of the Nishadas: Accept thou him! Wed thou with him! Ever happy and blessed is the union of the best with the best!" The Princess stood with head bowed and folded hands, as soon as she understood what the swan would say; but when he ended, she looked up with a smile and a sigh. "Dear bird!" she said, "speak thou even thus unto him also!"

And the handmaidens of Damayanti, from this time on, began to notice that she grew abstracted. She wandered much alone. She sighed and became pale, and in the midst of merriment, her thoughts would be far away. Then, delicately and indirectly, they represented the matter to Bhima, and he, reflecting that his daughter was now grown up, realised that her marriage ought to be arranged, and sent out messages all over the country, that on a certain day her Swayamvara would be held.

From every part, at this news, came the kings, attended by their bodyguards, and travelling in the utmost splendour, with horses and elephants and chariots. And all were received in due state by Bhima, and assigned royal quarters, pending the day of Damayanti's Swayamvara. And even amongst the gods did the news go forth, and Indra, and Agni, and Varuna, and Yama himself, the King of Death, set out from high heaven for the city of the Vidarbhas, each eager to win the hand of the Princess.

But as the proud gods went, they overtook a mortal wending his way on foot, and his beauty and greatness, of mind as well as body, were such that they immediately determined



to leave their chariots in the skies, and tread the earth in the company of this man. Then, suddenly alighting before him—for the gods know all—they said, “Nala! thou art a man to be trusted. Wilt thou promise to carry a message for us?”

Nala, seeing four luminous beings appear before him, and hearing them ask him to be their messenger, answered immediately, “Yea! That will I!” and then, drawing nearer, he added, “But tell me first, who are ye who address me, and what is the message, further, that I should carry for you?” Said Indra, “We are the Immortals, come hither for the sake of Damayanti. Indra am I. Here at my side is Agni, God of Fire. There is Varuna, Lord of Waters. And next to him stands Yama, destroyer of the bodies of men. Do thou, on our behalf, appear before Damayanti, saying, ‘The Guardians of the World are coming to thy Swayamvara. Choose thou, I pray thee, one of the gods for thy lord!’”

“But,” said Nala, “I myself am come hither with the self-same object. How can a man plead with the woman whom he loves on behalf of others? Spare me, ye Gods! Send me not upon this errand!”

“Then why, O King!” answered the gods gravely, “didst thou first promise? Why, having promised, dost thou now seek to break thy word?”

Hearing this, Nala spoke again, saying, “But even if I went, how could I hope to enter the apartments of Damayanti? Is not the palace of Bhima well guarded?”

But Indra replied, “Leave that to us! If thou wilt go, thou shalt have the power to enter!” and saying “Then, O Gods, I obey your will!” Nala found himself, on the moment, in the presence of Damayanti, within the private apartments of the palace of Bhima.

Damayanti sat amongst her ladies. The next day was to be her Swayamvara, and feeling sure that Nala would attend it, the smiles had come back to her lips, and the colour to her cheeks. Her eyes were full of light, and the words she spoke were both witty and tender. Seeing his beloved thus for the first time, Nala felt how deep and overflowing was

his love for her. Truly, her beauty was so great, that the very moon was put to shame by it. He had not thought, he had not heard, he could not even have imagined, anything so perfect. But his word was given and given to the gods, and he controlled his own feeling.

This determination did not take even so much as that instant which it required for him to become visible to the assembled maidens. As he did so, they sprang to their feet in amazement, feeling no fear, but struck with wonder at the beauty of the spirit who appeared thus before them, and full of the question, "Who can it be?" Yet were they too shy to venture to speak to him. Only Damayanti came forward gently, and smilingly addressed the heroic vision, saying, "Who art thou? And how hast thou contrived to enter unperceived? Are not my apartments well guarded, and the King's orders severe?"

Hearing these words, the King answered, "My name, O Princess, is Nala. I have entered here undiscovered, by the power of the gods. I come as their messenger. Indra, Agni, Varuna, and Yama, all alike desire, O beauteous one! at the morrow's Swayamvara to be chosen by thee. As their messenger, I say, 'Choose thou one of them for thy lord!'"

Damayanti bowed as she heard the names of the gods. Then, with a smile, she turned herself to Nala. "Nay, O Hero!" she answered, "it is not the gods, but thee thyself whom I shall choose. Thy message reached me, borne hither by the swans. Thee have I accepted in my heart. For thee has the Swayamvara been called. Failing thee, I refuse to be won by any!"

"Nay," answered Nala, "in the presence of the gods, wouldst thou choose a man? Ah, for thine own sake, turn thy heart, I pray thee, to those high-souled lords, the creators of the worlds, unto the dust of whose feet I am not equal! Misguided is the mortal who setteth them at nought. Be warned, I beg of thee. Choose thou one of these heavenly beings. What woman would not be proud, to be sought by

the protectors of men? Truly, do I speak unto thee, as thy friend!"

Tears were by this time running down the cheeks of Damayanti. Trembling, and standing before Nala with folded hands, she answered, "I bow to the gods, but thee, O King, have I chosen for my lord!"

"Blessed one!" answered Nala gently. "Do even as thou wilt. How dare I, having given my word to another, turn the occasion to my own profit? Yet, if that had consisted with honour, I would have sought my will! Knowing this, do thou decide."

The face of Damayanti had changed as Nala spoke these words. Under the tears were now smiles. For his secret was told. A moment she stood and thought, and then she raised her head. "I see a way, O Monarch," she said, "by which no blame whatever can attach itself to thee. Come thou to the Swayamvara with the gods. Then, in their presence, shall I choose thee. And the choice will be mine alone. Thou shalt be without sin."

Nala realised nothing, save the promise that Damayanti on the morrow would give herself to him. With throbbing pulses, but quiet manner, he bowed his head in farewell, and, immediately becoming once more invisible, returned to the presence of the gods and told them all that had happened. "The maiden said to me, 'Let the gods, O Hero, come with thee to my Swayamvara. I shall, in their presence, choose thee. Yet shalt thou be without sin.'" And the gods accepted the report of their messenger, for he had been faithful to his trust.

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The morning of the Swayamvara dawned brightly, and the kings entered the lofty portals of the amphi-theatre, even as lions might enter into the mountain wilds. The scene was all magnificence. Amongst the great pillars sat each royal guest on a shining throne. Each bore his sceptre and turban of state. Each was surrounded by his own heralds and minstrels, and amongst the blaze of silks and banners

and jewels shone the flowers and foliage that decorated the hall.

At the appointed hour, preceded by her trumpeters, and surrounded by her escort, the Princess Damayanti entered. And her loveliness was such that, to the assembled monarchs, she seemed to be surrounded with dazzling light. All drew in their breath, and remained almost without stirring, at the sight of such matchless beauty. One by one the names and achievements of each monarch were proclaimed. The heralds of the Princess would challenge, and those of each king in turn would reply, and Damayanti stood listening, ready to give the signal, when her choice should be made.

But when the name of Nala was called, and she raised her head and looked up, before stepping to his side, what was not the terror of Damayanti to find that there, seated side by side on different thrones, all equally splendid, all equally noble, were no less than five Nalas, and she had no means of distinguishing him whom she would choose?

The Princess looked and tried to choose. Then she hesitated, and stepped back. Then she tried again, but all to no purpose. She knew of course that this was a trick of the gods. Four of these five were Indra, Agni, Varuna, and Yama. One was Nala. But which one? She tried to remember the marks of the celestial beings, as they had been told to her in her childhood by old people. But none of these marks did she see on the persons before her, so exactly had they all reproduced the form of Nala. What must she do? At this supreme moment of her life she dared not make a mistake.

Pondering deeply in her own mind, it suddenly occurred to Damayanti that she should appeal for protection to the gods themselves! Immediately, bowing down unto them in mind and speech, and folding her hands reverently, she tremblingly addressed them:

"From that moment, O ye Gods, when I gave ear to the words of the wild swan, did I choose Nala, the King of the Nishadas, to be my lord. That I may be true to this, let the gods now reveal him to me! Inasmuch as neither in thought



nor word have I ever yet wavered in that resolve, oh, that I may hereafter be true to it, let the gods now reveal him to me! And since, verily, it was the gods themselves who destined the King of the Nishadas to be my lord, let them now, that they themselves may be true to themselves, reveal him to me! To Nala alone did I vow to give myself. That I may be true to this vow, let them now reveal him to me! I take refuge in the mercy of the exalted Guardians of the Worlds! Let them now resume their proper forms, that I may know my rightful lord!"

Touched by these pitiful words of Damayanti, and awed by her fixed resolve and her pure and womanly love, the gods immediately did what they could, in that public place, to grant her prayer, by taking back, without change of form, their divine marks. And straightway she saw that they were not soiled by dust or sweat. Their garlands were unfading, their eyes unwinking. They cast no shadows. Nor did their feet touch the earth. And Nala stood revealed by his shadow and his fading garlands; the stains of dust and sweat; his standing on the ground, and his human eyes. And no sooner did Damayanti thus perceive the difference between him and the gods, than she stepped forward eagerly to fulfil her troth. Stooping shyly, she caught in her left hand the hem of Nala's garment, and then raising herself proudly, she threw round his neck a wreath of beautiful flowers. And all present, seeing her thus choose the one human Nala for her husband, broke out into sudden exclamations, and the gods themselves cried, "Well done! Well done!"

And Nala stepped down from his high place, and said, "Since thou, O blessed one, hast chosen me, a mortal, from the midst of the Immortals, know me for a spouse to whom shall thy every wish be sacred. Truly do I promise thee, that as long as life lasts I shall remain thine and thine alone!" And so with mutual vows and homage, they both sought and received the protection of the gods. Then did all guests, royal and divine, depart; and the marriage of Nala and



Damayanti was performed; and they went, in great happiness, to the city of the Nishadas.

Now as the gods were returning to their own regions, they met Kali, the King of Darkness, and Dwapara, Spirit of Twilight, coming to the earth. And when they asked where they were going, Kali replied, "To Damayanti's Swayamvara. My heart is fixed on wedding with that damsel." Hearing this, Indra smiled, and answered, "But her Swayamvara is already ended. In our sight she hath chosen Nala for her husband." To this said Kali, that vilest of the celestials, in great wrath, "If, spurning the Immortals, Damayanti in their presence hath wedded with a mortal, then is it meet she should suffer a heavy doom!" But the gods answered, "Nay, with our sanction was it that Damayanti chose Nala. And what damsel is there who would not have done the same? Great and manly and learned, that tiger amongst men, that mortal who resembles one of the Divine Protectors, has truthfulness and forbearance and knowledge, and purity and self-control, and perfect tranquillity of soul. Whoever, O Kali, wisheth to curse this Nala, will end in cursing and destroying himself by his own act!"

Having spoken thus solemnly, the gods turned, leaving Kali and Dwapara, and went to heaven. But when they had gone, Kali whispered to Dwapara, "I must be revenged! I must be revenged! I shall possess Nala, and deprive him of wife and kingdom. And thou, entering into the dice, shalt help me to do this!"

Yet was it twelve long years ere Kali, watching Nala, could find in his conduct any slightest flaw by which he might be able to enter in and possess him. At last, however, there came an evening when he performed his worship without having completed all his ablutions. Then, through this error, Kali took possession of Nala. Also he appeared before his brother, Pushkara, tempting him to challenge Nala to a game of dice. And Dwapara also, at the same time, placed himself in the hands of Pushkara as the principal die. Such was the beginning of that terrible gambling that lasted

month after month, and ended by depriving Nala of all that he had.

Many times, in the course of that play, came Damayanti and the citizens and subjects of Nala, and begged him to desist. But he, maddened by the indwelling Kali, turned a deaf ear to his Queen, and grew only the more intent upon the dice. Till she, seeing that evil was about to come upon them, sent for the royal charioteer. "O charioteer," she said, "I seek thy protection. My mind misgiveth me. The King may come to grief. Take thou therefore these my children, my son Indrasena and my daughter Indrasenâ, and carry them to my father's house. And when thou hast given them into the care of my kindred, do thou even as thou wilt." And when the royal councillors had been consulted, they found the bidding of the Queen to be good, and the children were sent to the care of Bhima.

And when the charioteer had gone, Pushkara won from Nala his kingdom and all else that was left to him. And laughing he said, "O King, what stake hast thou now? Damayanti alone remaineth. Let us play for her!" And Nala gazed at Pushkara in anguish, but spake never a word.

Then, taking off all his ornaments, and covered only with a single garment, leaving behind him all his wealth, the King set out to leave the city. But Damayanti, clothing herself also in one long scarf, followed after him through the gates. And for three days and nights they wandered together, without food and without rest. For Pushkara had made proclamation that any who gave help to Nala should be condemned to death; so that, partly for fear of the sentence, and partly lest they should bring further harm on their King himself, none of his subjects dared to offer them anything.

At last, on the fourth day, wandering in the forest seeking for roots and fruits, Nala saw some birds of golden colour, and thinking, "Here is food!" snatched off his one piece of clothing, and threw it over them to catch them. But lo! the birds rose upwards to the sky, bearing the garment with them! And then, looking down and beholding the once

mighty lord of the Nishadas standing naked in the forest, his mind full of gloom, and his gaze rooted to the earth, the birds spake mockingly, and said to him, "Oh thou of little wit, we are none other than the dice with which thou playedst. We followed thee to take away thy garment. For it pleased us not that thou shouldst take with thee even a single cloth!" Hearing these words, and realising his terrible plight, since he had, it was evident, mysterious beings for his foes, Nala turned himself to Damayanti, and said over and over again, "Yonder, my gentle one, is the road to thy father's kingdom. I have lost all, Damayanti. I am doomed and deprived of my senses. But I am thy lord. Listen to me. Yonder is the road to thy father's kingdom."

But Damayanti answered him with sobs. "O King, how could I go?" she asked him, "leaving thee in the wild woods alone, deprived of all things, and worn with hunger and toil. Nay, nay, whenever, in these ill-starred days, thy heart may turn to the thought of thy former happiness, thou shalt find me near thee, to soothe thy weariness! Remember what the physicians say, 'In sorrow is there no physic equal to the wife!' Is it not true, O Nala, that which I say unto thee?"

"O my gentle Damayanti," answered Nala, "it is even as thou sayest. Truly there is no friend, no medicine, equal unto the wife. But I am not seeking to renounce thee. Why dost thou tremble so? I could forsake myself, beloved, but thee I could not forsake. Wherefore, my timid one, shouldst thou dread this?"

But on Damayanti lay the prevision of the wife, and she answered, "I know, O King, that thou wouldst not willingly desert me: Yet maddened and distracted, many things are possible. Why dost thou repeatedly point out to me the way to my father's home? Or if thou really desirest to place me with my kindred, then let us wend together to the country of the Vidarbhas. Thou shalt there be received with honour by the King, and, respected by all, shalt dwell happily in our home." "Surely," answered Nala, "thy father's kingdom

is to me even as my own. Yet could I not by any means go there at such a crisis. Once did I appear there in fortune, bringing glory upon thee. How could I go in this misery, causing thee shame?"

Talking together in this fashion, Damayanti had contrived to share her own clothing with her husband, and thus wandering slowly on together, they came to a shed reserved for travellers. Here they sat down on the bare earth to rest, and then, worn out with hunger and weariness and sorrow, both, unawares, fell fast asleep.

But Nala, whose mind was distraught by Kali, could not rest. As soon as Damayanti slept, he woke, and began to turn over in his mind all the disaster he had brought upon her. Reflecting on her devotion, he began to think that if only he were not with her, she would surely find her way to her father's kingdom. And out of the very honour in which he held her, it was unimaginable to him that she should be in danger on the way. Thinking thus, the question occurred to him, how could he cut their common garment without her being awakened by his act? And with this question in his mind, under the influence of Kali, he strode up and down the shed. At that very moment, he caught sight of a sword lying a step or two away, unsheathed. Seizing this, he cut the veil in half, and then, throwing the sword away, he turned and left Damayanti, in her sleep, alone.

Yet again and again, his heart failing him, did the King of the Nishadas return to the hut to look once more, and yet once more, at his sleeping wife. "Dragged away," says the chronicler, "by Kali, but drawn back by love," it seemed as if the mind of the wretched King were rent in twain, and one half fought against the other. "Alas! alas!" he lamented, "there sleepeth my beloved on the bare earth, like one forlorn! What will she do when she awaketh? How will she wander alone through the perils of these woods? May the Sun himself—thou blessed One!—and the Guardian Spirits, and the Stars and the Winds, be thy protectors, thy womanly



honour being its own best guard!"\* And addressing thus his dear wife, peerless in beauty, Nala strove to go, being reft of his reason by Kali. Till at last, stupefied and bereft of his senses, Nala forsook his sleeping wife. In sorrow departed he, maddened and distraught, leaving her alone in that solitary forest.

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Three years had gone by, and once more Damayanti was dwelling—but now with her children by her side—in her father's house. For Bhima had sent out messengers in all directions to seek for her, and by them had she been found and brought back to her own people. But always she wore but half a veil, never would she use ornaments, and ever she waited sorrowfully for the coming again of her husband, Nala. For in all this time he had never been heard of.

Now it had happened to Nala that on finally leaving Damayanti he saw a mighty forest-fire, and from its midst he heard the voice of some creature crying, "Come to my aid, O mighty Nala!"

Saying, "Fear not!" the King stepped at once within the circle of fire, and beheld an enormous snake lying there coiled up.

And the snake spoke, saying, "I have been cursed, O King, to remain here, unable to move, till one named Nala carry me hence. And only on that spot to which he shall carry me can I be made free from this curse. And now, O Nala, if thou wilt lift me in thy hands, I shall be thy friend, and do to thee great good. Moreover, there is no snake equal unto me. I can make myself small and light in thy hands. I beseech thee to lift me and let us go hence!"

Then that great snake made himself as small as the human thumb, and taking him in his hands, Nala carried him to a place outside the fire. But as he was about to place him on the ground, the snake bit him, and Nala perceived that as he was bitten, his form had been changed.

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\* *Lit.*—Adityas, Vasus, Ashwins, and Maruts.



And the snake spoke, saying, "Nala, be comforted! I have deprived thee of thy beauty, that none may recognise thee. And he who has wronged and betrayed thee shall dwell in thee from this time in uttermost torture. Henceforth art thou in peace, and that evil one in torment from my venom. But go thou now to Ayodhya, and present thyself before the king there, who is skilled in gambling. Offer him thy services as a charioteer. Give to him thy skill with horses, in exchange for his knowledge of dice. When thou dost understand the dice, thy wife and children will be thine once more. And finally, O King, when thou desirest to regain thy proper form, think of me and wear these garments." And saying these words that lord of Nagas gave unto Nala two pieces of enchanted clothing, and immediately became invisible.

And Nala made his way to Ayodhya, and entered the service of Rituparna the King, receiving great honour as the Master of the Horse. And all the stables and their attendants were placed under him; for Rituparna desired nothing so much as that his steeds should be fleet.

But night after night the fellow officers of the charioteer—who was known in the palace of Ayodhya as Bahuka—would hear him alone, groaning and weeping, and listening they distinctly heard the words: "Alas! where layeth she now her head, a-hungred and a-thirst, helpless and worn with toil, thinking ever of him who was unworthy? Where dwelleth she now? On whose bidding doth she wait?" And once, when they begged him to tell them who it was that he thus lamented, he told them in veiled words his whole story. "A certain person," he said, "had a beautiful wife, but little sense. The wretch was false. He kept not his promises. Fate came upon him, and they were separated. Without her, he wandered ever to and fro oppressed with woe, and now, burning with grief, he resteth not by day nor night. At last he has found a refuge, but each hour that passes only reminds him of her. When calamity had overtaken this man, his wife followed him into the wild woods. He repaid her

by deserting her there! Abandoned by him, lost in the forest, fainting with hunger and thirst, ever exposed to the perils of the wilderness, her very life was put by him in danger. Yea, my friends, it was by him—by him that she was thus deserted, by him, that very man, so foolish and ill-fated, that she was left thus alone in the great and terrible forest, surrounded on every side by beasts of prey—by him, by him!”

With his mind dwelling thus on Damayanti, did Bahuka the charioteer live in the palace of Rituparna. And Damayanti, sheltered once more in her father's house, had one thought, and one only, and that was the possibility of recovering Nala. Now it was the custom amongst the Vidarbhas to send out Brahmins periodically, who, bearing the King's orders, wandered from town to town and from country to country, telling stories to the people from the holy books, and giving religious instruction wherever it was needed. It had indeed been by the aid of these strolling teachers that Damayanti herself had been discovered, when she was acting as lady-in-waiting to a foreign princess. Now, therefore, it was decided that she should give them their directions, and try by their means to trace out her long-lost husband. They came to her therefore for instructions, and she gave them a song which they were to sing in all the assemblies that they should come to in every realm.

“Whither, beloved Gambler, whither art thou gone,  
Cutting off one half my veil,  
Abandoning me, thy devoted wife,  
Asleep in the forest?  
Ever do I await thee,  
As thou wouldst desire me,  
Wearing but half a veil,  
Enwrapt in sorrow.  
Relent, O King! O Hero!  
Relent and return thee,  
To her who weepeth incessantly  
For thy departure!”

"Crying thus, add to the part your own words," she said to the Brahmins, "that his pity be awakened. Fanned by the wind, the fire consumeth the forest!"

Again—

"Surely a wife should be protected  
And maintained by her husband.  
Strange that, noble as thou art,  
Thou neglectest both these duties!  
Wise thou wast, and famous,  
High-born and full of kindness.  
Why didst thou then deal to me this blow?  
Alas, the fault was mine!  
My good fortune had departed from me!  
Yet even so, thou greatest, thou noblest  
Amongst men, even so, have pity,  
Be merciful to me!"

"If, after ye have sung in this wise," said Damayanti to the Brahmins, "any should chance to speak with you, oh, bring me word of him! I must know who he is, and where he dwelleth. But take ye great heed that none may guess the words ye speak to be at my bidding, nor that ye will afterwards return to me. And do not fail, I beseech ye, to seek out all that is to be known regarding that man who shall answer to your song!"

Having received these orders, the Brahmins set out in all directions to do the bidding of Damayanti. And their quest led them far and near, through cities and villages, into strange kingdoms, amongst forests, hermitages, and monasteries, and from one camp of roving cowherds to another. And wherever they went they sang the songs and played the part that Damayanti had laid upon them, seeking in every place, if by any means they might bring back to her news of Nala.

And when a long time had passed away, one of these Brahmins returned to Damayanti, and said to her, "O Damayanti, seeking Nala, the King of the Nishadas, I came to the city of Ayodhya, and appeared before Rituparna. But

though I repeatedly sang thy songs, neither that King nor any of his courtiers answered anything. Then, when I had been dismissed by the monarch, I was accosted by one of his servants, Bahuka the charioteer. And Bahuka is of uncomely looks and figure, and possessed of very short arms. But he is skilful in the management of horses, and is also acquainted with the art of cookery.

“And this Bahuka, with many sighs and some tears, came up to me and asked about my welfare. And then he said, ‘She should not be angry with one whose garment was carried off by birds, when he was trying to procure food for both! The honour of a woman is its own best guard. Let her not be an-angered, against one who is consumed with grief. Noble women are ever faithful, ever true to their own lords, and whether treated well or ill, they will forgive one who has lost all he loved!’ Hearing this, O Princess, I hastened back to tell thee. Do now what seemeth best unto thyself.”

Words cannot describe the joy of Damayanti as she heard this news. She knew now where Nala was, and the task with which he was entrusted. It lay only with her woman’s wit to find some means of bringing him to her father’s house. Having pondered long and carefully over the matter, she went to her mother, and in her presence sent for the same confidential servant—a kind of chaplain to the royal household—who had found herself and brought her back from exile to the city of the Vidarbhas. Having her mother’s full sanction, but keeping the matter secret from Bhima, Damayanti turned to this Brahmin, Sudeva, and said, “Go straight as a bird, Sudeva, to the city of Ayodhya and tell Rituparna the King that Bhima’s daughter, Damayanti, will once more hold a Swayamvara. Kings and princes from all parts are coming to it. Knowing not whether the heroic Nala lives or not, it is decided that she is again to choose a husband. Tomorrow at sunrise, say thou, when thou seest him, the ceremony will take place.” And Sudeva, bowing before the Queen-mother and her daughter, left the royal presence, and proceeded to Ayodhya.



When Rituparna heard the news, he sent immediately for Bahuka, the charioteer. If he desired in one day to reach the city of the Vidarbhas, there was only one driver in the world who could enable him to do so. "Exert thyself, O Bahuka!" he exclaimed. "Damayanti, daughter of Bhima, holds tomorrow a second Swayamvara, and I desire to reach the city this very day!"

Hearing these words Nala felt as if his heart would break. "What!" he thought to himself, "is this the madness of sorrow? Or is it perhaps a punishment for me? Ah, cruel is this deed that she would do! It may be that, urged by my own folly, the stainless Princess cares for me no longer. Yet I cannot believe that she, my wife, and the mother of my children, could possibly dream of wedding any other. In any case, however, there is but one thing to be done. By going there I shall do the will of Rituparna, and also satisfy myself." Having thus reflected, Bahuka answered the King, saying, "O Monarch, I bow to thy behest. Thou shalt reach the city of the Vidarbhas in a single day."

Wonderful and eventful was the driving of Bahuka the charioteer that day. Never had Rituparna, or the servant who attended him, seen such skill. The servant indeed remembered, as he watched it, the fame of Nala. But he turned his eyes upon the driver, and seeing his want of beauty, decided that this could hardly be he, even though he should be disguised and living as a servant, in consequence of misfortune. Every now and then the chariot would rise into the sky, and course along with the fleetness of the wind. Like a bird would it cross rivers and mountains, woods and lakes. In a few seconds it would speed over as many miles. And Rituparna knew not how to express his delight in the skill of his charioteer. Words could not speak his anxiety to reach the city of the Vidarbhas before nightfall; and more and more, as the hours went on, did he become convinced that only with the help of Bahuka was this possible. But about noon the two became involved in a dispute about the number of leaves and fruits on a certain tree. Rituparna, who



was a great mathematician, said there were so many, and his officer insisted on stopping the car, cutting down the tree, and counting, to see if the King's words were true! Rituparna was in despair. He could not go on without Bahuka, and Bahuka was intent on verifying the numbers. However, the charioteer was sufficiently amazed and respectful to the King's knowledge when he had counted the fruits and found them to be correct. Then, in order to coax him onwards, Rituparna said, "Come on, Bahuka, and in exchange for thy knowledge of horses, I will give thee my knowledge of dice. For I understand every secret of the gaming-table. This was the very moment for which Nala had waited and served so long! However, he preserved his composure, and immediately the King imparted to him his knowledge. And lo! as he did so, Kali, the spirit of darkness, came forth, invisible to others, from within Nala, and he felt himself suddenly to be released from all weakness and blindness, and to have again all his old-time energy and power. And radiant with renewal of strength, the charioteer mounted once more on the chariot, and taking the reins in his hands, drove swiftly to the city of the Vidarbhas."

As Rituparna, towards evening, entered the city, the sound of the driving of his chariot fell on the ears of Damayanti in the palace, and she remembered, with a thrill, the touch of Nala on a horse's reins. But, mounting to one of the terraces, she looked out, and could see only one who drove like Nala, but none who had his face and form. "Ah!" she sighed, "if he does not come to me today, tomorrow I enter the funeral fire! I can bear no longer this life of sorrow!"

The King of Ayodhya meanwhile, hastening to call on Bhima, began to think there must have been some mistake. He saw no other kings and princes with their chariots. He heard no word of any Swayamvara. He therefore said that he had come merely to pay his respects. This, thought the King of the Vidarbhas, was a little strange. A man would not usually come so far and in such hot haste, in a single day,

merely for a passing visit of courtesy. However, feeling sure that the reason would reveal itself later, he proceeded to offer Rituparna the attentions due to his rank and importance.

Nala, however, had no eyes for anything about him. Buried in thought, he gave orders for the disposal of the horses, and having seen them duly carried out, sat down with arms folded and head bent. At the sound of a woman's voice he looked up. A maid sent from within the palace was asking him, in the name of Damayanti, why and for what purpose had he and Rituparna come. "We came," answered the charioteer bitterly, "because the King heard that the Princess of the Vidarbhas would for a second time hold a Swayamvara!" "And who art thou?" again asked the maiden. "Who art thou? And who yon servant yonder? Might either of ye by chance have heard aught of Nala? It may even be that thou knowest whither King Nala is gone!"

"Nay, nay!" answered Bahuka. "That King in his calamity wanders about the world, disguised, and despoiled even of his beauty. Nala's self only knoweth Nala, and she also that is his second self. Nala never discovereth his secret to any!"

"And yet," replied the maid, "we sent a Brahmin to Ayodhya, and when he sang—

'Ah, beloved Gambler, whither art thou gone,  
Taking with thee half my veil,  
And leaving me, who loved thee,  
Sleeping in the woods?  
Speak thou, great King, the words I long to hear,  
For I who am without stain pant to hear them!'

When he sang thus, thou didst make some reply. Repeat thy words now, I beseech thee. My mistress longeth again to hear those words!"

At this Nala answered in a voice half choked: "She ought not to be angry with one whose garment was carried off by birds, when he was trying to procure food for both! The

honour of a woman is its own best guard. Let her not be angered against one who is consumed with grief. Noble women are ever faithful, ever true to their own lords, and, whether treated well or ill, they will forgive one who is deprived of every joy!" As he ended, the King could no longer restrain himself, but burying his head in his arms, gave way to his sorrow; and the girl, seeing this, stole away silently to tell all to the Princess.

News was brought also to Damayanti of the greatness and power of Rituparna's charioteer. It was told her how on coming to a low doorway he would not stoop down, but the passage itself would grow higher in his presence, that he might easily enter it. Vessels at his will filled themselves with water. He needed not to strike to obtain fire, for on holding a handful of grass in the sun, it would of its own accord burst into flame in his hand. Hearing these and other things, Damayanti became sure that the charioteer Bahuka was no other than Nala, her husband. Yet, that she might put him to one more test, she sent her maid, with her two children, to wander near him. On seeing them, Nala took them into his arms and embraced them, with tears. Then, realising how strange this must seem, he turned to the waiting-woman and said apologetically—"They are so like my own! But do not thou, maiden, come this way again. We are strangers here from a far land. We are unknown, and I would fain be alone."

And now, having heard this, Damayanti could wait no longer, but sent for the permission of her father and mother, and had Nala brought to her own apartments. Coming thus into her presence, and seeing her clad just as he had left her, wearing only half her veil, the seeming charioteer was shaken with grief. And Damayanti, feeling sure that he was Nala, and seeing him as a servant, whose wont it was to be a king, could scarcely restrain her tears. But she composed herself, and said quietly, "Well, Bahuka, did you ever hear of a good man who went away and left a devoted wife, sleeping alone, in the forest? Ah, what was the fault that

Nala found in me, that he should so have left me, helpless and alone? Did I not choose him once in preference to the very gods themselves? And did he not, in their presence, and in that of the fire, take me by the hand, and say, 'Verily, I shall be ever thine'? Where was that promise, do you think, when he left me thus?"

And Nala answered, "In truth, it was not my fault. It was the act of Kali, who hath now left me, and for that only, have I come hither! But, Damayanti, was there ever a true woman who, like thee, could choose a second husband? At this moment have the messengers of thy father gone out over the whole world, crying, 'Bhima's daughter will choose again a husband who shall be worthy of her.' For this it is that Rituparna is come hither!"

Then Damayanti, trembling and affrighted, folded her hands before Nala, and said, "O dear and blessed Lord, suspect me not of evil! This was but my scheme to bring thee hither. Excepting thee, there was none in the whole world who could drive here quickly enough. Let the gods before whom I chose thee, let the sun and the moon and the air, tell thee truly that every thought of mine has been for thee!" And at the words, flowers fell from the sky, and a voice said, "Verily Damayanti is full of faith and honour! Damayanti is without stain!"

Then was the heart of Nala at peace within him. And he remembered his change of form, and drawing forth the enchanted garments, he put them on, keeping his mind fixed on the great Naga. And when Damayanti saw Nala again in his own form, she made salutation to him as her husband, and began to weep. Then were their children brought to them, and the Queen-mother gave her blessing, and hour after hour passed in recounting the sorrows of their separation.

The next day were Nala and Damayanti received together in royal audience by Bhima. And in due time, Kali being now gone out from him, Nala made his way to his own kingdom of the Nishadas and recovered his throne, and then,

returning for his Queen, Damayanti, and their children, he took them all back to their own home, and they lived there happily together ever after.



## THE CYCLE OF THE RAMAYANA

As Mary, the Madonna, to the women of Christendom, so is Sita, Queen of Ayodhya, to them of Hinduism. Hers is indeed a realm beyond the aspiration of merely earthly sovereigns. For she is the ideal of womanhood itself, and she wields undisputed sway, in millions of hearts, over the kingdoms of love and sorrow, and stainless womanly honour and pride. Though beautiful and a queen, she never chose ease. To her the simple lives of saints and scholars were more joyous than all the luxuries of courts. She knew every mood of the forests, joining in their praise in the early morning, when birds wake and blossoms open and the dew is fresh; and bowing her soul with theirs in the evening adoration. She shared a throne, yet never forgot that for their people's good, and not for their own pleasure, do sovereigns reign. She knew the highest human happiness, and was not blinded by happiness. She knew the deepest and bitterest sorrow, and lived serene amidst her sorrow. Such was Sita, Queen of Ayodhya, crowned of love, veiled in sorrow, and peerless amongst women.

## THE CITY OF AYODHYA

To the north of Benares, between the Himalayas and the Ganges, stretches the country now known as Oudh, whose name long ago was Koshala. In the whole world, perhaps, can be few other lands so beautiful as was this, for it abounded in corn and in cattle and in forests, and all its people were prosperous and in peace. Koshala had great rivers, and fair places of pilgrimage, and noble cities, many and great. And she was surrounded on every hand by strong kings and powerful kingdoms. Yet was she the jewel amongst those kingdoms, and the centre of the circle. And, like a queen among cities, walled and moated, adorned with towers and stately buildings, and with numberless banners and flags and standards, stood Ayodhya, the capital of Koshala. And she was wonderful to behold. Thronged by the kings of neighbouring kingdoms was she, coming to her to pay their tribute; frequented by the merchants and craftsmen of many lands; full of palaces and parks, and gardens and orchards. And Ayodhya was famous both for her wealth and for her learning. She abounded in rice and in jewels, and the waters of her wells and streams were sweet as the juice of sugarcane. And her streets were thronged with heroes, and her cloisters with scholars and with saints. Her roads, moreover, were broad, and kept constantly watered, and strewn with flowers. Verily, like unto the sovereign city of Indra's heaven, was the city of Ayodhya, in the land of Koshala.

Beautiful and beloved as she was, however, of her citizens and children, Ayodhya had yet one thing which they prized above all others. This was the memory of how once upon a time she had been ruled by a divine king. For the story went that long ages ago there had sat on her throne one Rama, who was the Lord Himself. It was said that Vishnu, being desirous of showing unto men what an ideal king should be, bodied Himself in this form, and Lakshmi, the

divine spouse, dwelling from all eternity in the heart of God, took shape as Sita, the consort of Rama; and for one short generation of mortals, perfect manhood and womanhood were seen on earth, in these two royal lives.

The ways of fate are mysterious, and the lives of men and gods how strangely different! Surely for this it was that these sovereign careers were so full of sorrow. Yet never for one moment did Sita or Rama fail to remember that the well-being of their people is the highest good of monarchs. And the peasants of Oudh remember to this day "the kingdom of Rama," and pray, with longing in their hearts, for its return.

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Rama the Prince was the eldest son of the King Dasha-ratha and his wife Kaushalya. He was highly trained and proficient in all the sports and accomplishments of knight-hood; and along with his half-brother Lakshmana he had won his spurs, by making an expedition—under the guidance of one of the greatest scholars of the age—in which he had been able to survey the whole of his dominions, and had also rooted out and exterminated in their own strongholds certain notorious demons and outlaws, who had long troubled the peace of cities and Ashramas in Koshala. It was at the end of this victorious journey that Rama and Lakshmana had been received with great honour by Janaka, King of Mithila, and given his daughters, Sita and Urmila, in marriage. The princes had been joined at Mithila on this occasion by their father Dasharatha, who was present at their twofold wedding, and took them back with him in his train to Ayodhya.

What a dream of happiness had been the years that followed! Bending their will in all things to that of their father, the princes had discharged with brilliance the duties of their high station. Rama especially, having truth and justice for his prowess, became the joy of the whole people. Making their pleasure and welfare his sole object, he admi-

nistered the affairs of the city heedfully. And bending his wise mind to his young wife, Sita, and dedicating to her his whole heart also, Rama passed long hours of delight in her sweet company. She charmed him, say the old records, as much by her loveliness as by her dignity and nobleness, and still more by her goodness than by her loveliness. And she in her turn, by her perfect sympathy and graciousness, was able to enter into every thought and feeling of Rama, so that the bond of her wifehood was one of joy as well as duty. And those who saw Sita and Rama together, felt them to be in truth one soul, and inseparable, even as Vishnu, the Divine Lord, cannot be separated in the thoughts of men from Shri, the divine grace.

Now seeing his son Ramā so full of virtues and accomplishments, there arose a desire in the heart of the old King Dasharatha to have him made king before he himself should die. And being much troubled by certain inauspicious omens observed by the royal astrologers—omens which were apt to portend trouble, and even to bring about the deaths of kings—he felt that the coronation would be well made without delay. Therefore he called to his presence a royal council, and when the nobles and ministers were all assembled, he told them his whole mind, and asked advice. "It may be," said he gently, ending his statement and appeal, "that my longing desire, and also my weariness, obscure my judgment. Well do I know that from the voices of many in conference is truth brought forth." As the King ceased speaking, there arose the sound of a restrained resonance, as of many talking softly together. The nobles and the Brahmins, the ministers and great citizens, discussed quietly amongst themselves the new proposal. At last, having come to a common decision, they appointed their own spokesman, and announced to Dasharatha their sympathy and agreement with all his wishes. And when the whole assembly, at the end of this address, raised their clasped hands to their heads like so many lotuses, in token of their acquiescence, the King felt an in-



expressible relief and joy. He sent messengers for Rama, summoning him to appear before the council, and these, receiving homage from him, acquainted him with his intention of installing him on the morrow as his immediate successor. Then, having again received the homage of his son, Dasharatha dismissed the assembly, and began to make preparations for the forthcoming ceremony.

Scarcely had the counsellors and officers of the household dispersed, when the King, retiring to his own apartments, sent once more for his son, and talked with him long and quietly regarding his own wishes, the ceremony of the morrow, and the possibilities of his future policy. Reminding him, at last, of the necessity that both Sita and himself should pass the night in prayers and austerity, Dasharatha dismissed him, and Rama sought the presence and blessings of his mother, Kaushalya, before returning finally to his own palace. There he was followed almost immediately by the priest of the royal family, with minute instructions for the evening observances, and the hours that remained were spent accordingly.

Now the news of the installation had gone out through all Ayodhya. The streets and thoroughfares were thronged with excited people. Every house was decorated with raised flag-staffs and flying pennons. The terraces and verandahs of the city were filled with groups of watchers. Garlands and incense and great branching lampstands had been brought out for the adorning of the roadways. Even frolicsome lads, playing about the city, knew only one theme, and stopped their games to talk eagerly together of the anointing of the Prince that would take place on the morrow.

Yet amidst all this joy, the heart of Dasharatha the King was filled with a strange unrest. He could not forget that his dreams of the night before had been ill-starred. And he had a feverish desire to hurry on the installation, for his mind turned, with a curious foreboding, to his second son Bharata, now absent from the city, as the source of some possible ill to Rama. Bharata had never failed in the course of duty, nor



did the King in any way suspect his motives. Yet something he knew not what, whispered to him that it would be well to crown Rama in the absence of Bharata.

There lived in the palace of Dasharatha, in the apartments of the youngest Queen, Kaikeyi, a certain hump-backed woman, of malicious temper, who acted as an attendant. This woman, returning from a journey, and making her way into that palace whose splendour was like that of the moon, found all Ayodhya at work, having the streets watered, strewn with lotus-petals, and ornamented with pennons. She saw too the crowds of freshly-bathed worshippers, heard the chanting of music of rejoicing, saw the thresholds of the temples sprinkled with white powder, and perceived the fragrance of sandal-wood in all the water. There could be no doubt, in fact, that the city was keeping some unexpected festival, and she was not slow to acquaint herself with the reason.

Through this woman, then, came to Kaikeyi the news of the approaching coronation of Rama. On first hearing it, the young Queen was filled with delight, and tossed a costly and beautiful jewel to her handmaid, in token of her pleasure. But the woman knew how to poison the mind of her mistress, and an hour or two later, when Dasharatha came to call on Kaikeyi, in order to acquaint his youngest wife in person with his plans regarding Rama, the servants told him, to his consternation, that if he would find her, he must follow her to the anger-chamber.

There, in truth, lay the King's wife—even, if the truth were known, his favourite wife—on the bare floor, like a fallen angel, having cast away her garlands and ornaments. Clad in garments that were not fresh, her countenance clouded with the gloom of wrath, she looked like a sky enveloped in darkness, with the stars hidden.

Like unto the moon rising in a sky covered with fleecy white clouds, so did Dasharatha enter into the mansion of Kaikeyi. Like a great elephant in the midst of a forest, did he seek her out, in the anger-chamber, and, gently caressing her brow and hair, ask what he could do to comfort

her. Again and again did he promise that nothing she could ask would be in vain.

At this Kaikeyi rose; and called upon sun and moon, night and day, the sky, the planets, and the earth, to witness to the King's words. And having done so, she reminded him of how she had once nursed him back to life, in his camp, in time of war, and how he had then promised her two boons, which it would lie with her to name. Today, at last, she would claim these boons. She desired that her husband should banish Rama to the forests, sentencing him to live for fourteen years the life of a hermit. And she desired further that her own son Bharata should be installed and crowned in his stead as heir-apparent.

At first the King indignantly refused Kaikeyi's absurd requests. Then, comparing her habitual sweetness and nobility with her present extraordinary conduct, he wondered if she had suddenly become insane. Finally, he pleaded and remonstrated, striving to make her withdraw her request. The affection he had hitherto felt for this youngest and most charming of his three queens began now to seem to him like a disloyalty to Rama's mother. He wondered if he had caused her pain and loneliness. He saw his whole life as an error, and he prayed for mercy.

But Kaikeyi, in her present strange and cruel mood, was inflexible. She spoke only to remind the King of the heinousness of a broken promise. Again and again she insisted that the word had been given, and it must be kept. And in the morning it was she who sent messengers to summon Rama to an early audience of his father, to be given in her presence. It was she also, standing behind the seat of the afflicted monarch, who fixed piercing eyes on the kneeling prince, and asked whether he had strength to fulfil a vow taken by his father.

Rama answered in surprise, that for Dasharatha, his father and his king, he would leap into the fire, or swallow deadly poison. And when his mind was thus prepared, amidst the groans and sighs of her husband, she command-

ed the prince that day to leave the kingdom, and withdraw to the forest for fourteen years, there to live the life of the most pronounced ascetic, while her own son Bharata would ascend the throne and reign in his stead.

Not a shadow passed over the face of Rama as he listened to this demand. Nor did those outside the palace, who saw him a few minutes later, perceive in him the slightest sign of mental trouble. Fully agreeing with Kaikeyi that the King's word must at all cost be kept, touching his father's feet with his head, and seeking in vain to offer him consolation, he cheerfully gave the pledge his stepmother required, and turned away, as happily as he had come, to make preparations for the day's departure.

He had recognised in his own mind, the moment he heard the words of the young Queen, that she was merely voicing the will of some power behind herself. Never before had he had to make any distinction between the honour due from him to his own mother and to her. Nor had she ever before distinguished, in her affection, between himself and her own son Bharata. Yet here was she, the daughter and wife of kings, ordinarily possessed of an excellent disposition and highly accomplished, speaking harshly and cruelly in the presence of her husband, like the most ordinary of women! To the mind of Rama, this was incomprehensible. Therefore he put it aside, as the working of destiny, over which neither Kaikeyi nor he could have any control, and set himself to fulfil it. He laughed quietly with Lakshmana at the jars of water, standing in rows, which had been carried by the servants for the coronation ceremony. "Verily," said he, "water drawn with my own hands from the well, would be more fit for the ceremonies that will today accompany the vows of a hermit!"

But he knew well that of the two things, the forest-life or a throne, the forest was more glorious. And with a glad heart he made preparations to leave without delay. Lakshmana would fain have led an armed rebellion against Dasharatha, in favour of Rama. Kaushalya would willingly

have measured forces with Kaikeyi for the protection of her son. But Rama, whose mind did not waver for a moment, soothed and calmed all opposition, and made it understood that his decision was final. The King's word must be made good.

Sita, in the inner apartments of her own palace, had spent many hours in the morning worship, and stood now, waiting for the return of her husband. She half-expected him to return to her, duly installed and anointed, covered with the white umbrella of state, and surrounded by innumerable attendants. Instead of this, he entered her presence with a look of hesitation, showing signs, with regard to her, of uncontrollable emotion. Reluctantly he told her that this meeting was their farewell. He must wend his way to the forest, and live for fourteen years in banishment.

Tears had sprung to the eyes of the Princess at the thought that they must be parted, but when she heard the reason, she recovered all her gaiety. Life in the forest had no terrors for her; the loss of a throne occasioned her no regret; if only she might follow her husband, and share his life and its hardships with him. And so at last it was arranged. Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, presented themselves before Dasharatha in full court, and there doing homage and saying farewell, they received from the hands of Kaikeyi the dress of ascetics, and set out immediately for the life of exile in the forest.

And it came to pass that some days later, when Bharata, the son of Kaikeyi, returned to Ayodhya, he found that his father, Dasharatha, had died of grief. And when he discovered why and by whom this had been caused, he fell upon the hump-backed serving-woman, and in his wrath, although she was a woman, had almost slain her, till she, in her despair, took refuge in the name of Rama, and was spared. And when they told the young prince that the kingdom was his, he could hardly speak for wrath and shame. For in the eyes of Bharata there was none so beloved as

his elder brother Rama. Likewise to him was his allegiance sacred, for he regarded Rama as his King.

Bharata, therefore, withdrew from Ayodhya—leaving the sandals of Rama on the throne of the King, under the shadow of the royal umbrella—and stationed himself at Nandigram, to rule the kingdom in his brother's name. Thus Kaikeyi had not even the satisfaction of acting as the mother of the sovereign, for by Bharata's own orders all men continued to regard Rama as the monarch, and Kausalya his mother as the Queen-mother.



## THE CAPTURE OF SITA

How delightful to Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana were the years of their forest-exile! Wherever they went they were welcomed by companies of hermits, and admitted to the forest ways of life. Thus they were quickly established in huts made of leaves, and carpeted with the sacred grass, like other ascetics. Quickly, too, had they arranged their accessories of worship, and gathered together their small stores of necessaries. And without loss of time Sita fell into the habits of cooking for her husband and brother, like any peasant-woman, and serving them with her own fair hands. Now and then it would happen, during their first years in the forest, that they came upon some great saint, who would recognise Rama at the first glance as the Lord Himself. But more often they met with ascetics of a commoner mould, who understood the personal prowess of the royal brothers, and begged them, with folded hands, to rid the forests of the demons and brigands who were apt to make the life of the Ashramas one of danger.

So Rama and Lakshmana, armed with royal weapons, ranged through the forests, slaying and maiming the demon-races everywhere. For this reason, all evil beings became their foes. And far away, in the Island of Lanka, Ravana, the ten-headed king of demons, determined to compass the death and destruction of Rama.

While these royal anchorites, therefore, sat in the evening shadows of the forest, watching the last low rays of the setting sun, and talking together on high themes; while Sita fed the birds and called the squirrels to eat from her hands or her lips; or while they all watched the green steeds that go in the dawn before the chariot of Indra, evil was brewing for them in the distant south. One of the kindred of Ravana had been scarred and disfigured by Lakshmana, and not by any means could the Ten-headed forget.

One morning Sita was busied in little household offices, going to and fro about the hermitage, gathering flowers for the day's worship here, or fruits for the noonday meal there. Suddenly she noticed, at some distance, a small and very beautiful deer, feeding and playing in the shadows of the trees. In colour this deer was bright golden. Its hair looked strangely soft and thick, and it was near enough for the Queen to observe the exquisite fineness of its hoofs, and the delicacy of ears and eyes.

Some strange enchantment had surely, that morning, fallen upon Sita, for she, who was usually so merciful to all living things—pleading for their lives with her husband and his brother—was now all eagerness that this deer should be caught. She foresaw long years in Ayodhya, when she would keep it as a palace pet. And when at last it should die, its skin should be used, by Rama or herself, as the seat of worship.

Shamefacedly, and in a whisper, she called her husband and brother-in-law to see the little creature and hear her wishes. Lakshmana was by no means taken by the animal. He suspected some magic spell, and warned both Sita and Rama to be on their guard. But these suspicions seemed groundless; Sita's longing to possess the deer continued; and Rama was so desirous of giving her pleasure that, without loss of time, he attired himself for the chase, and seizing his weapons, and commending his wife to his brother's care, sallied forth.

The deer had a curious way of leading him near enough to take aim, and then vanishing, only to reappear in some unexpected direction. This it did time after time, and Rama was led far afield in pursuit. The sun had already passed noon, and the shadows were beginning to grow long, when, at last, the hunter succeeded, and an arrow was lodged in the heart of the quarry. Then the form of the deer dropped away, and out of it rose the fiend-wizard Maricha, who exclaimed loudly three times in Rama's own voice, "O Sita! O Lakshmana!" and vanished.

Far away in their distant cottage Sita heard these cries of Rama, and shivered with terror, for she knew not what might have happened to her lord. She turned, therefore, and entreated Lakshmana to leave her and go and seek for Rama. All through the hours of that terrible day, she had dimly felt that evil was drawing nearer and nearer to them all, yet not so distinctly could she foresee its nature as to be able to ward it off. Now, however, all these fears and vague presentiments were concentrated in her anxiety about her husband's fate: Lakshmana, too, had not been without forebodings, but these made him extremely averse to leaving Sita alone. He could not imagine Rama at a loss and requiring his assistance, but he felt gravely responsible for the safety of the young wife. So keen, however, grew the trouble of Sita, and so insistent was her urging, that at last there was nothing for it but to go. So, warning her not to leave the shelter of the cottage during his absence, Lakshmana went forth to seek for Rama.

Scarcely had he gone, when a holy man appeared at the door, asking alms. Dreading to be uncharitable, Sita turned to speak with him and offer him the usual hospitality. She felt ill at ease, however. She could not forget that she was alone. And above all, she little liked the looks that the mendicant cast at her from time to time. Trying to conceal her agitation, she looked out in the direction whence she might expect to see Rama return from his hunting, together with Lakshmana. But on all sides she beheld only the yellow forest-lands. Neither Rama nor Lakshmana was in sight.

Soon she discovered that the Brahmin who stood before her was not what he seemed. The rags and matted locks of a holy man were only a disguise adopted by Ravana, the ten-headed Demon-King, who had come, in the hope of carrying her away. Horrified at the dilemma in which she had so rashly placed herself, the courage of Sita, and her confidence in her husband, never wavered for an instant. She warned the Demon-King that he might more safely offer violence to the wife of Indra himself, the Wielder of

the Thunderbolt, than to her, the wife of Rama. For an insult done to her, none, she said, should escape death, not though he drank the nectar of immortality.

At these words, Ravana suddenly assumed his proper form, vast, and having ten heads and twenty arms. Having done this, he seized Sita by force, and rose, carrying her, into the sky.

Weeping as she went, Sita cried aloud, charging everything around her, the rivers, lakes, and trees—nay, the very deer who must be moving beneath her—to tell Rama, on his return, that she had been seized by Ravana. At her cries, it is said, the king of the eagles awoke from his age-long slumbers in the mountains, and flung himself at Ravana, for the rescue of Sita. Nor was it till every ornament had been riven from Ravana's person, his weapons broken, and his flesh made torn and bleeding—nay, not till the lordly eagle himself had received his death-wound, that the king of birds desisted from that fierce encounter. Then Sita darted towards the prostrate body, and, stroking it with her hands, wept in the midst of the forest, calling on Rama and Lakshmana to save her.

Suddenly Ravana swooped down on her once more—as she stood, with her faded garlands falling backwards, vainly clasping a friendly tree—and seizing her by the hair, rose again, bearing her into the sky.

And the veil of yellow silk that she wore streamed in the wind, looking like sunset clouds against the sky. And when the invisible beings of the upper air saw this sight, it is said that they rejoiced, for to them the capture of Sita meant the death of Ravana, and they regarded the release of the world from his terror, as already accomplished.

But the daughter of Janaka, being borne through the air by Ravana, looked like lightning, shining against dark clouds. Like stars dropping from the sky, because their merit is exhausted, so did her golden ornaments begin to fall to the earth. And the anklets flashed as they dropped, like the circling lightning. And her chains shone, even as



the Ganges throwing herself from heaven. And showers of blossoms fell from her head to the earth, and were drawn up again by the whirlwind of Ravana's swift passage, so that they studded the space about him as he went, in a ring, and looked like rows of burning stars, shining about a sombre mountain.

And the trees, waving their branches in the agitation of this flight, strove to whisper, "Fear not! Fear not!" And the mountains with their waterfalls and their summits towering upwards like uplifted arms, seemed to lament for Sita. And the lotuses faded in the pools, and the fish became troubled, and all the creatures of the forest trembled, for wrath and fear. And the wind wailed, and the darkness deepened, and the world wept, while Sita was borne away by Ravana to his island-kingdom of Lanka in the south.

But she, as she went, seeing five great monkeys seated on the top of a hill, conceived a sudden hope that by their means she might send news to Rama, and flung down amongst them, unseen by Ravana, certain ornaments, and also her yellow veil.

And Rama, wending his way homeward through the distant forest, after the slaying of the deer, noticed that the jackals were howling behind him, and had not a doubt that some ill had befallen him. A moment later he met Lakshmana, and knew Sita to be alone.

But when the two heroes, shaken with anxiety, reached their cottage, and found that she had vanished, the anguish of Rama was impossible to describe. At first, hoping against hope, he refused to believe that she was lost. But when at last there was no conceivable hiding-place that had not been searched and found empty, when the silent forest had failed to answer his despairing questions, when every call had been echoed back from the desolate wilderness, then Rama came to the conclusion that Sita had been devoured by demons, and with the bitterest self-reproaches, he fell into a stupor of grief.



## THE CONQUEST OF LANKA

Now when the morning had come, and Rama and Lakshmana, ranging the forests, had found some of the flowers and jewels of Sita, it appeared as if Rama, calling up his divine energy, would annihilate the world. Filled with rage, girding himself tight with bark and deerskin, his eyes red with anger and his matted hair pulled up short, he stood in the forest, shortening his bow and taking out flaming arrows with which to shoot, even as Shiva, the Destroyer, in the act to destroy. But Lakshmana, overcome with pity for a sorrow that could so move his brother to a wrath never shown before, soothed him, and spoke to him words of patience and encouragement. Let him first try caution and energy. Let him strive for the recovery of Sita. Only if he should fail in this, would there be need, with his arrows of celestial gold, flaming like the thunderbolt of Indra, to set himself to uproot the world from its foundations, scattering its fragments amongst dead stars.

Being thus calmed, and following the marks of conflict—drops of gore, jewelled arrows, and pieces of golden armour—they came gradually nearer and nearer to the scene of the battle between Ravana and the eagle. At last they reached the spot itself, to find the king of birds with both his wings cut off in the encounter, breathing his last. Between laboured gasps he told them of the struggles he had witnessed, and the cries he had heard. He was able also to utter the name of the Demon-King. But when he would have told them more, he died. And the Lord, filled with gratitude and compassion for this feathered hero, performed over his dead body those ceremonies of piety which lift the soul to the higher regions. And then, making their way from point to point, the two brothers persisted in their quest of Sita.

It was in the forest that bordered the beautiful lake of

Pampa, with its red and white lotuses, that they met with a band of monkeys whose chieftain, Sugriva, was mourning the capture of his own wife at the hands of an enemy. Strange to say, it had been into the midst of this very Sugriva's council that Sita had dropped her scarf and ornaments, and these were now brought forth for Rama's inspection. At sight of them he was overcome, for the things were undoubtedly Sita's, though Lakshmana was able to recognise only her anklets. Then the monkeys created branches of fragrant and beautiful blossoms to shade their king and his guests, and all sat down and entered together into consultation. But first the great monkey, Hanuman, son of the Wind God, produced a fire by means of two pieces of wood. Then, worshipping the flame with flowers, he placed it carefully between Ram and Sugriva, and they went round it together, and so were fastened in friendship. And it is said that at that moment, in her distant prison, the left eye of Sita throbbed for joy at that alliance between her lord and the monkey-chief.

It was agreed between the two sovereigns—Sugriva and Rama—that the King of Kōshala should first slay Vali, the enemy of the monkeys, and restore his own wife to Sugriva. This having been done, Sugriva, on his side, would undertake to discover the hiding-place of Sita, and to furnish troops for the conquest of Ravana and the destruction of his strongholds. This expedition could not, it was determined, be undertaken in the rainy season, but immediately on the setting in of autumn, it should be carried out without fail.

Scrupulously did the two human allies fulfil their share of this treaty. Within a few days Sugriva's enemy was slain, and his wife restored to him. But alas, for the instability of the monkey-nature! He became straightway immersed in woodland frolics, and Rama saw the precious days and weeks slipping away from him, while, as far as he could see, no preparations whatever were being made. This, it must be said, was not literally true; for Hanuman, the

monkey general and councillor, had already remonstrated with his sovereign regarding this unseemly delay, and had been despatched by Sugriva to collect an army. So when Lakshmana at last went, with manly directness, to protest against perfidy and want of faith, their ally was able to point to the gatherings of hundreds of thousands whom he could see about him, and to assure him that in many other parts of the forests formidable monkeys and bears would be found stationed, each with another army in his keeping, waiting to receive their marching orders.

The first point was to find out the whereabouts of Sita, and for this purpose Sugriva divided the hosts of monkeys, ordering some to search in the north-east, others in the north-west, and still others again in the distant south. His own reliance, however, was placed mainly on the prowess and energy of the great Hanuman, who was going with the southern army; and when he said so to Rama, the King gave this emissary a ring engraved with his own name, to be a token to Sita, should he find her, of whence he came.

But many weeks of unavailing search went by before Hanuman, Son of the Winds, swelling himself to a vast size, and concentrating all the energy of his mind, leapt at one bound across the sea, and landed in Lanka, the island-kingdom of Ravana. Having done so, the powerful monkey paused. High on a mountain-top before him, gleaming in inconceivable loveliness of level terraces and soaring spires, he saw the famous city of Lanka; and he took counsel with himself as to the means by which he might enter her. Finally he determined to wait for sunset, and when that hour came, he reduced himself to the size of a cat, and so entered the city.

It was, in truth, like some dwelling-place of the gods. Its many-storied buildings and fretted screens were studded with crystal. Great archways and splendid gates lent it their grandeur in all directions. Its streets and roadways were broad and well-cared for. Magnificent were its towers of victory. Beautiful were its lantern-pillars. Its houses were

like palaces, and its tombs like dainty marble canopies. Wonderful, verily, was this Lanka, famous throughout the world, ruled over by the might of Ravana, and vigilantly guarded by night-rangers of terrible strength. Oppressed by the thought of this glory, the spirit of Hanuman became sunk in gloom; when suddenly, as if on purpose to comfort him, the full moon arose in all her splendour with the stars. And the great monkey looking up, saw her, lovely with the sheen of a white conch-shell, wearing the tint of a white lotus, arisen and afloat in the heavens, like a beautiful swan swimming in a lake.

Hour after hour of that night did Hanuman range, without success, through the mansions of the great lords of Lanka. In and out of their halls and apartments he went; not a single sleeping-chamber did he leave unexplored. Even the palace of Ravana saw him enter it, and the ten-headed king, sleeping off the night's intoxication, knew not that a little monkey, whose visit boded no good to him or his, drew near in the small hours of the morning, and peered at him, as he lay on his great sleeping-dais of polished crystal. But nowhere, in any of those mansions or great houses, did Hanuman find Sita.

The Queen of Ayodhya, in fact, within a few hours of entering Lanka, had been banished to a park of Ashoka-trees, and placed there in charge of demon-women, powerful to look upon, and instructed to torment her. Ravana had quickly realised that favours could have no influence over his proud captive, and had determined to try on her the effect of harsh treatment. Now Sita was the daughter of the Earth-Mother. It was told of her that her father in her babyhood had found her in a ploughed furrow. To her, therefore, the open grove, and the wide air, and running streams, were more bearable than the close walls of the palace, with its luxuries, had been. She was too deeply wrapped in sorrow to notice the faces or the treatment of her women guards. She had not even tasted food while in captivity. For on the first night of her imprisonment the



God Indra, casting the people of Lanka into an enchanted sleep, had appeared before her, bringing in his hands the food and drink of Heaven, which take away from mortals all hunger and thirst. And when the Queen was afraid to touch his gifts, lest he should prove in truth to be some other, wearing the guise of the King of Heaven, he shone forth before her for a moment with his divine attributes, and then she ate and drank fearlessly from his hands of the food of the Immortals. Thus had she lived in her garden-prison during the weary weeks and months of her separation from Rama, and here, as the dawn approached, did Hanuman find her, feeling sure that his quest was ended.

Seated beneath a tree beside the river was a woman weeping. Pale and worn she was, and clad in threadbare silken garments of worship. But the bent head had about it something queenly, and the veil was worn with a grace unknown to the demon-women of Lanka. The monkey could see, moreover, that this woman before him was fair of tint, and very beautiful. Her air, with all its grandeur, had also in it something that was dainty and gentle. He held his breath, for he could hardly doubt that this was that Sita whom he sought, the captive wife of Rama. As he waited and watched, however, quivering with the excitement of his discovery whom should he see enter the garden but the great ten-headed Ravana himself! Bowing low before the prisoner, the Demon-King took a seat at some distance from her, on the grassy bank, turning himself to face her, and the monkey bent his ear to a level with the branch on which he sat, the better to hear each syllable that might pass.

At the approach of Ravana the pale Queen had grown still more pale, and Hanuman could see that she was trembling with fear, like a green plant in the wind. But when her visitant began to speak, a red spot burnt on her cheeks and a light in her eyes, and she raised her head haughtily, as if it could hardly be to *her* that he presumed



to address himself. To most of what he said, she listened as if she scarcely heard. Once, indeed, her captor waited, as if expecting some reply. But she answered only, "I have warned you already, O Demon-King! that the deeds you have done, and the words you now speak, will be punished with death. Only one who desired to mock the gods, and bring ruin upon himself, could act as you have the daring to do." Then again she sat, looking before her into space as if she neither saw nor heard.

When Ravana at last left the garden, in rage and disgust, he sent back into it the demon-guards, and they encircled the beautiful Sita, tormenting her. And she, finding herself in the midst of them, like a fawn encircled by wolves, burst into tears, and sobbed to herself, with broken words of sorrow and endearment, for the loss of Rama. At this the demon-women drew back somewhat, finding little amusement in their sorrowful prisoner. But though this was the very opportunity that Hanuman had waited for, yet he was afraid to address the Queen suddenly, lest she should be startled and call her guards. To avoid this, therefore, he began to run about, talking to himself about Rama, in order to attract her attention.

At last his mistress looked up. "Oh, dear Brother of the Woods," she said, "do you also know the beloved name?"

"Madam," answered the monkey very quietly, "I think that you are she whom I was sent to find. If so, tell me what is your state here."

"I am Sita," answered the captive, in a low, subdued voice, "daughter of Janaka of Mithila, and wife of the son of Dasharatha. And I am imprisoned here, under sentence of execution. Two moons hence, I am condemned to die."

Then Hanuman hastened to tell her all he could of Rama: that he was well; that day and night he brooded on the thought of her rescue; that he had gathered together a great army for the overthrow of Lanka; and finally, that he himself had been deputed by him to find out, and report on, her place of concealment.

At all this news Sita was overjoyed. Yet she was not without doubt also. For Ravana had the power of taking other shapes at will. Already he had approached her as her own mother, and again he had appeared before her as Rama himself, in the hope that she would at least speak kindly to him, which only a miracle had prevented her doing. Now, therefore, she could not even be sure that this monkey was what he seemed to be. She dreaded another of the demon's tricks.

Then Hanuman came forward and placed at her feet the engraved seal of Rama, that he had sent her as a token.

Hurriedly Sita lifted the jewel and concealed it in her hair. Tears broke from her eyes, and she sobbed with joy. Then, with nervous, trembling fingers she took from some part of her dress a charm that her husband had given her, and told her messenger at the same time to remind the King of a certain great hawk who had wounded her and been slain by him, as they sat together one afternoon in the gardens of Ayodhya. By the twofold token of the talisman and the memory, she knew that her place of imprisonment would stand accredited.

"Lady," said the monkey, as he put his cold nose down on the earth to salute her, before leaving the garden, "how easily could I carry you home to Rama on my back! I am larger and stronger than you think. The matter to me would be a small one!"

The Queen had drawn herself back as he spoke, and a change had come over her face, as though she remembered that other wild flight through the evening shadows, when Ravana, like some gigantic bird of prey, had carried her through the skies to Lanka. "Oh no!" she said, half hesitating, lest she should hurt her servant, yet wholly firm, "I could not let any one take me home except my husband himself!"

"And that is well!" said Hanuman, feeling deep satisfaction within himself at her reply. "For I think that my master also would desire for himself the honour of liberating

you. It will not be long till he reaches you, and then you will be royally avenged. But now I feel my wild monkey-nature hot within me, and I have it in mind to do Ravana some mischief ere I leave this place."

A whisk of his tail, and another salutation, and he was gone, leaving the captive lonely indeed, but full of hope. Next day she remembered his parting words with secret smiles—for news was brought to her that in the orchards of the demons all the young fruit had been destroyed in a single night, by a terrible monkey, who had slain numberless guards, and had been seen at one bound to leap across the sea.

Rama, meanwhile had ranged his army in order, and tested his command. When Hanuman, therefore, returned with his welcome news, he was ready to order the march upon the seashore. The next problem was that of taking the troops across the straits. At the fiercely-impatient prayer of Rama, Ocean himself now appeared to him, and reft his own bed upwards to form the basis of a bridge from the mainland to Lanka. Then all the hosts of monkeys came forward with branches and logs and trunks of trees, and built the whole into a firm and lofty structure, steady enough to withstand the tides of the salt sea. And the people tell how even the little squirrels helped in the building of the bridge to Lanka, bringing stones and shells and broken nuts to make it smooth. And for this, when the work was ended, the Lord took one of these smallest workmen in his hand, and stroked him, blessing him, from head to tail. And because of this blessing of Rama it is that the Indian squirrel wears three white stripes on his dark fur—they are the finger-marks of the blessing of the Lord of the Universe.

Thus was built the bridge that spans to this day the straits beside the great pearl-fisheries of Mannar. And when it was finished, the troops were brought safely across it; and all knew that the very next step would be the seizing

of Lanka, the destruction of Ravana, and the release of Sita.

All this time Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, had been imploring her husband to set his prisoner free. But he had answered only with expressions of contempt for Rama, and boasts of his own power. When the forces of the enemy had been brought across the sea, however, everything was changed. Ravana himself, it was said, had leapt to his feet in consternation when the news was heard. The hostile army was now at their very gates; and the prospects that only the day before were still unclouded, looked very grave. For in Lanka, by this time, they judged of the power of each one of Rama's soldiery by that of Hanuman, who in a few hours had destroyed, unaided, all their orchards.

Mandodari now, therefore, was joined in her pleadings by her husband's own brother. "Set the stranger free," they entreated, "while yet there is time to save the city! Rama is in the right, and fate itself must fight upon his side!"

To his brother, Ravana gave some curt reply, that drove him in anger out of his presence. But to his wife he was exceedingly gentle. "My beloved," he said, "it is the enemy's duty to avenge himself upon us, if he can. Would you rather that your husband and sons died, if die they must, whining for mercy, or bravely, as good knights should, contending for their prize?"

Then Mandodari felt that her husband had spoken his secret thought, that he and her boys would die, and she be left childless and a widow. But she uttered no cry, nor shed even a tear, for she knew that her work now must lie in strengthening, not in making them afraid.

Some hours later Rama and Lakshmana, in their camp, saw an officer with soldiers drawing near to them under a flag of truce. He dismounted on reaching them, and said, "Gentlemen, we, the people of Lanka, are entirely in the wrong in this matter. I have come to offer you my alliance." It was Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, with his men-at-arms.



The princes received him as an honoured guest and proclamation was made, that on the taking of Lanka he should be appointed governor.

Almost immediately after this the storming of the city began, and it is told in an old book that during the course of the siege Lakshmana saw an archer on the walls take aim at Vibhishana to shoot him. The brother of Rama remembered only, in that moment, that the deserter was their guest, and ran forward to receive the arrow, says the teller of the tale, as a man might run to embrace his beloved. Thus was the life of Vibhishana saved, though that of Lakshmana himself was well-nigh lost. The siege lasted many days, but the town finally fell, and only the fortress remained to be attempted.

And now, at last, did Rama achieve his heart's desire, for he engaged in single combat with Ravana, and slew him with his own hand. Then the great doors of the castle were flung open, and the moment had come for the return of Sita.



## THE ORDEAL OF SITA

RAMA'S whole heart was filled with the longing to see Sita, and renew once more the life-sweetness which had been broken that morning when he left her to catch the golden deer. Yet he was no mere mortal, full of blind impulse, a prey to the chance-born desires of the passing moment. He foresaw that if their reunion was to be secure, it must take place in public, and must be accompanied by some proof of his wife's honour and devotion which could never be shaken in the popular mind. There could be no happiness for Sita if her subjects did not love her and trust her implicitly. There could be none for him if her name were not lifted high above the stain of suspicion or reproach.

But the first duty that awaited him had nothing to do with these questions. He was at this moment at the head of a conquering army. His first responsibility lay in protecting the city, with its women, its children, and its treasures, from his own forces. He hastened, therefore, to crown and proclaim Vibhishana King of Lanka. This done, he called Hanuman secretly, and, bidding him obtain the permission of the new King to enter the city, sent him to Sita to acquaint her privately with his victory.

Publicly he proffered a formal request to Vibhishana that he would personally escort the Queen of Koshala to his presence. She was to come, moreover, wearing the robes and jewels proper to occasions of state. The loving heart of the woman would have prompted her to fly to the shelter of her husband just as she was, in the mourning garments of her captivity. But Vibhishana reminded her gently of the sacredness of a husband's expressed wish, and she submitted immediately to the tiring which this imposed. Hard, verily, are the roads that princes walk! Treading at each step on her own heart, must Sita make her way to her husband's side.

At last the Queen was ready and entered the closed palanquin, with its hangings of scarlet and gold, in which she would be borne into the presence of Rama, Vibhishana himself riding before her to announce her coming. At the city gates, however, came the request that she should alight and proceed through the open camp on foot. Scarcely understanding, and so absorbed in the thought of seeing the King that she had little care for any minor detail, Sita rose from her seat in the covered litter and stepped out on the broad road. Round her, to right and left, were the soldiery. In front was seated Rama, in full audience, with grave and solemn air. All eyes were on Sita, who had never, since her childhood to this hour, been seen in public. Instinctively the knightly Vibhishana realised the embarrassment this must cause to the shrinking and sensitive Queen, and he was in the act of ordering the dispersal of the crowds, so as to leave the meeting of the royal pair unwitnessed, when Rama put up his hand and stopped him. "Let all stay!" he commanded. "This is one of those occasions when the whole universe becomes the veil of woman, and she may be seen by all without sin!"

Nearer and nearer came Sita meanwhile, with slow and regal step. Her eyes were drinking in every line, every movement of her husband's face. He rose to receive her; but all men saw that he looked not towards her, but stood with head bowed and downward-gazing eyes. How beautiful was the Queen! How stately and full of grace she looked! And yet, decked as she was in royal ornaments, there was that about her which spoke more plainly still, assuring all who looked on her that here was a woman of true and noble heart, a humble and loving wife, fit to be, as she was, the crown and support of all the happy homes throughout her land. Every man in the hosts that day held his breath in awe and reverence, at the revelation seen in her of what great womanhood should be.

At a sign from her husband, and a few paces away, the Queen stood still, and Rama looked up and addressed her

in thick, constrained tones. "Ravana has been duly defeated and slain," he said. "Thus has the honour of Ayodhya been vindicated to the utmost. It is for the Queen, whom he separated from her husband, to say in what guardianship, and with what establishment, she will now choose to live. Thy wishes, O gentle one!" he added, addressing her for a moment directly and swept away by his own tenderness, "shall be carried out in full. But it is not seemly or possible to restore to her old place one whose fair fame has been sullied by residence in the palace of Ravana."

At these words the Queen stood, in her sudden astonishment and pain, like one who had been stabbed. Then she raised her proud head to its proudest height, and, though her lips quivered and the tears fell, without her will, her wonderful voice rang out untremulous. "My character," she said, "must indeed be misconceived. Even Rama, it seems, can mistake my greatness, and truly then am I undone! Yet if my lord had but told me, while yet I was imprisoned in Lanka, that it was for the honour of Ayodhya he would recover me, I would indeed have spared him all his labours. How easy had it been to me to die there, only I supposed that other motives moved him! Go, Lakshmana, and make for me here a funeral pyre! Methinks that is the only remedy for the disaster that has come upon me."

This, then, was Sita's desire for guardians and establishment! Lakshmana looked towards his brother in anger and surprise, but, receiving only a quiet gesture, hastened to have the funeral pyre prepared. The face of Rama was like that of Death himself in the hour of the final destruction of all things, and none present dared to speak to him. As for Sita, her tears were now raining down; but still she stood there, waiting patiently.

When the wood had been piled and the fire set blazing, Sita walked three times round her husband, standing in his place, with head bowed, and it was evident to all that her heart was full of sweetness. Then, coming forward to the fire, and standing before it with her hands folded as for

prayer, she said, "Do thou, O Fire, the witness of the worlds! protect me, whose heart has been ever true! Take me to yourselves, O ye pure flames! for unto the Lord of Purity the pure fleeth."

Saying this, and walking three times round the pyre, the Queen, having bidden farewell to the world with undaunted heart, entered into it. Like gold being set upon a golden altar was the stepping of Sita into that flaming fire. And lamentations arose on all sides from amongst the lookers-on. But lo, as her foot touched the pyre, voices of angelic sweetness were heard from heaven chanting the glory of Rama, and the mystery of the ineffable union of the Divine Being with His own divine grace. And there advanced from the heart of the fire to meet Sita, Agni, the God of Fire, himself. Supporting her with his right arm, and stepping out from amongst the flames, the divinity bore her forward to Rama, whose face had suddenly become radiant with joy, and gave her to him, joining them together.

"She is thine own, O Rama!" he said; "she is thine own—ever faithful and true to thee, in thought, word, and deed. Lo, at my command is it that thou takest her back unto thee. For I have spoken, and she is thine own!"

And Rama said, receiving her, "Verily, my beloved, no doubt was in my mind concerning thee. Yet was thy vindication needful, in the presence of all our people. Truly art thou mine. Think not thou canst be divided from me. Thou art mine, and I could not renounce thee, even as the sun cannot be separated from his own rays."

And as they stood thus, wedded once more—as in their youth by man, so now by the God of Fire himself—it seemed to all present as if the gates of heaven were suddenly swung backward above them, and they saw Dasha-ratha, seated in his car, blessing Sita as well as Rama, and hailing them King and Queen of Ayodhya.

It was true that the fourteen years of their exile were ended, and as Rama understood from this vision that the soul of his father would not be in peace till his coronation



was finally accomplished, he did everything that was possible to hasten their departure. A day or two passed, distributing wealth and rewards amongst the soldiers, and then mounting with Sita into the royal car, drawn by white swans, they coursed swiftly through the sky, and arrived at Ayodhya.

It is told of the days that followed that, Rama governing that kingdom, widows were not distressed, nor was there fear from wild beasts nor from disease. The people were safe from robbers, and there was no other trouble. The old were not called upon to perform the funeral ceremonies of the young. All were happy together, nor did they envy one another. And the trees bore fruits and flowers perpetually. Showers fell whenever they were desired. And the winds blew pleasantly. And all men became pious and truthful under the rule of Rama, and his kingdom was blessed with all the marks of fortune.

How happy would have been the story if it had ended thus! So did the great poet Valmiki intend it. And so for hundreds of years must men have known it. But in some later age, by an unknown hand, a sequel was written, and this sequel is strangely sad. It tells how the terrible ordeal of Sita had not after all been enough, or perhaps had taken place too far away, to satisfy her people. The murmuring and suspicion that Rama had foreseen, did, after all, break out; and when he heard this, the King knew that it was useless to fight against the inevitable, Sita and he must henceforth dwell apart. For the good of his subjects a king must be willing to make any sacrifices, and it could never, he felt, be for their well-being that their sovereign's conduct should be misunderstood. But though his will was thus heroic, Rama could not trust himself to see Sita and say his last good-bye to her, face to face. He sent her, therefore, in the care of Lakshmana, to make a long-desired pilgrimage to the hermitage of Valmiki, on the far side of the Ganges. There Lakshmana was to give his parting messages, and take farewell of her.



Oh how terrible was the desolation of Sita on this occasion! There was, indeed, the consolation that she understood her husband, and he her. The last words of each for the other made this separation of theirs like the plighting of a solemn troth. Yet she knew that their parting was to be for ever. She would be always with him in spirit, but neither might hope to look upon the other's face again.

Twenty years passed in this retirement, under the guardianship of the wise and fatherly Valmiki, whom the twin sons of Sita regarded as a kind and beloved grandfather. But when twenty years had gone by there came to Valmiki's hermitage the news of a royal sacrifice at Ayodhya. Now the saint had already composed *Ramayana*, and taught it to Lava and Kusha, the sons of Rama. He determined, therefore, to take the boys to Ayodhya and let them sing the poem before their father, on the occasion of the sacrifice.

Long before it was finished, Rama had realised that the lads before him must be his own. It took many days to chant the poem, but the King and his counsellors listened greedily to the end. Then, with a sigh, Rama turned to the great Valmiki and said, "Ah, if only Sita were here! But she could never consent to a second trial of her honour!"

"Let me ask her!" answered Valmiki, who longed above all things to bring this husband and wife together once more, for the happiness of both.

To the surprise of Rama, word was brought that Sita would consent next day to go through a second public trial, this time by oath instead of by the fiery ordeal.

The morning came. The King and all his ministers and attendants were seated in state, and vast crowds, of all ranks and from all parts of the country, were admitted to see the trial of Sita. In came the Queen, following after Valmiki. Closely veiled, with head bent, hands folded, and tears in her eyes, she walked; and it was easy to see that all her mind was meditating upon Rama. A murmur of

praise and delight broke from all the spectators. Little did any one there dream of what they would shortly see happen!

As Valmiki presented the Queen to Rama and to the assembly, and as Rama turned to call upon her to swear to her own faithfulness and sincerity, before all their people, every one noticed that a cool and fragrant breeze began to blow, as if betokening the nearness of the gods. No one, however, was prepared for the effect of Rama's words on Sita.

That proud though gentle soul had borne all that was possible to her. Perfect in sweetness and perfect in submission, she had endured twenty years of loneliness without murmuring. But all now had come to an end. "O divine Mother!" she cried, "thou great Earth-Goddess, if it be true that in my heart I have never thought of any other than Rama, then for my wifely virtue take me to Thyself! If constantly, by thought, word, and deed, I have prayed for his welfare, then for this great virtue do Thou give me refuge!" And as the weary cry rang out, a wonderful thing happened. The earth opened, and a great jewelled throne rose up, carried on the heads of Nagas, lords of the underworld. On the throne sat the Earth-Goddess, stretching out her arms to take to herself this child of hers, who had cried to her for refuge; and celestial flowers rained upon both, as the throne re-entered the earth. At the same time voices were heard from the heavens, saying, "Glory, glory unto Sita!" And as the Queen and the Earth-Mother passed out of sight of men, the whole universe passed, for one moment, it is said, into a state of holy calm.

One heart, however, did not share this peace. The mind of Rama was torn with grief. And true as Sita had been to him, so true was he ever after unto her. For the performance of those ceremonies in which the help of a queen was necessary, he had a golden image made of his wife, and went through his official actions by its side. So passed all things, until that hour had struck, beyond which no man

may delay, and when that came, Rama and his brothers bade farewell to the world, and going out of Ayodhya to the river-side, they entered into their divine bodies, and were seen no more in the world of men.

And ages passed by, and the story of their days became a memory, for there were none left on the earth, of all those who had lived beneath their sway.

## THE CYCLE OF KRISHNA

### THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA, THE INDIAN CHRIST-CHILD

*"Thou Supreme Bliss of Devaki!"*

Kamsa, the tyrant king of Mathura, was wicked and oppressive beyond the power of men to bear. The very earth cried out against his injustice and evil deeds. And then, for the comforting of those who could endure no more, a prophecy began to be whispered about, regarding the slaying of the tyrant. And the origin of this prophecy was indeed most strange.

Kamsa had a great love for his sister Devaki and also for Vasudeva, one of his nobles, and his friend. He exerted himself, therefore, to bring about a marriage between the two, and when the wedding was over, he himself acted as charioteer, to drive them both to the home of Vasudeva. But lo! on the way, a voice spoke to him from heaven, saying, "The eighth child of this couple, O Tyrant, shall be a boy, who in his twelfth year shall slay thee with his own hands!" At these words, all Kamsa's love for the bride and bridegroom turned to hatred. Swiftly he turned the horses' heads and driving back to Mathura, whence they had come, cast Devaki and Vasudeva into the dungeons underneath his palace, there to endure imprisonment for life, that he might the more easily slay each child of theirs at birth. And now this had happened seven times, that a child had been born, and Kamsa had destroyed it—save indeed once. For one child, the boy Balarama, had been carried away secretly, and the King had been told that he was already dead. Now, however, had the time come for the fulfilment of the prophecy. And Devaki and her husband waited in their prison for the coming of that child who should be the deliverer of His people.



Outside, the wind wailed, and the rain fell, and the waters of the Jamuna rose, as if in flood. The night was wild, whereon would come to earth Krishna, the Holy Child. Within, in the dungeons of Mathura, Devaki and her husband Vasudeva waited, trembling; for they knew that tonight, of a truth, would be born as their son that soul of whom it had been foretold that he, and no other, was the destined slayer of Kamsa. Was it not for that very reason that they at this moment were in prison? And their hearts were sore within them, for what welcome could they offer to the coming child? Knew they not, only too well, that with the morning Kamsa himself would visit them, to kill the babe with his own hands? Terrible was the time of watching, while the storm howled without, round them rose the bare forbidding walls of the prison, and in the heart of poor Devaki the hope and love of a mother struggled with sadness and fear.

Slowly, slowly the hours went by, till midnight. And then, just as the bell of the great water-clock outside the palace began to boom out the hour, the hearts of the mother and father were filled with joy, for at the very moment, their Babe had come to them. In that one brief instant, as she held Him in her arms, Devaki forgot the ordeal of the morrow, forgot the cruel death that awaited her Child, and knew only the bliss of the mother, who welcomes the newly-born.

At the moment of His birth, the prison was filled with a soft light, streaming out from the Babe Himself, and as He lay back in His mother's lap, they saw shining out from behind Him four arms. One hand held the Shankha or battle-trumpet; another the discus; a third the mace; and in the fourth was a lotus on its stem. Then Devaki and Vasudeva knew these for the signs of Vishnu, and they worshipped the Child, saying the salutations, as Narayana, Saviour of the World. But as the salutations ended, the veil of Maya descended upon them once more, and the Child appeared to them as their own babe. All about them

now, however, they heard voices. At first they did not trust to their own ears, thinking the sounds were of the wind and rain. But presently, listening, they heard distinctly the words, "Arise! Take the young Child, and leave Him in the house of Nanda, Chief of the Cowherds, in the village of Gokula, and bring hither the girl-child who has just been born there."

What could be meant by telling a prisoner, unable to leave his prison, to rise and carry a baby to a village on the far side of the Jamuna? How could Vasudeva open the dungeon doors? How could he pass the guards? How, if he did all this, would he be able to cross the Jamuna itself on coming to it at this late hour? Yet the feeling of some incomprehensible power was strong upon them, and they were full of terror for the fate of the Child on the morrow. So Vasudeva yielded himself to the bidding of the unknown. He arose, lifted the Babe, covered Him with his own garment, and, staff in hand, went forward to the prison-entrance. To his amazement the bolts slid back, the locks turned, the chains fell softly, and the heavy doors swung outwards of their own accord before him. Outside, the guards and soldiers slumbered heavily, and no one woke, as Vasudeva, with the Babe Krishna hidden beneath his robe, passed into the open road.

Here the storm was even worse than it had sounded from within the prison. Heavily the warm rain fell, and the winds raged, and the man's heart was heavy with foreboding, as he listened to the rushing of the great river in the distance, and wondered how he should reach its further bank.

At this very moment, in the darkness before him, he saw a jackal, and silently resolved to take the wild creature as his guide. On went the animal; on followed the man, until they came to the river-side. Then the jackal plunged in at a certain place, and proceeded to make his way over, and Vasudeva, seeing that here there must be a ford, step after step went across in his wake. And men say that in

the guise of this jackal, for protection of the Divine Child, it was Durga, Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Universe, who had come to earth that night.

But it is told that, as they went, the Babe grew heavier and heavier in His father's arms, till all at once He slipped and would have drowned, only just in time he caught Him back and bore Him safely on. For Mother Jamuna also longed to take the Lord into her keeping, and fold Him for a moment to her breast.

At last came Vasudeva with his precious burden to the village of Gokula, and to the dwelling-place of Nanda, the King of Cowherds. Softly the door of the great farm-house opened before him, and, still obeying the same gentle guidance that had led him forth from the prison, he entered, and saw a light burning in the first room within the doorway. The lamp stood by the bedside of a sleeping mother and a new-born child. Quietly, quietly Vasudeva bent down and exchanged the children. To the farmer-chieftain's wife he gave the Babe he carried, and from her side he took the little daughter who slept there. Then, without a word, he turned and went back by the way he had come, to the dungeons of Kamsa, in the city of Mathura, and gave the girl-child of Nanda to his own wife, Devaki.

Great was the rejoicing amongst the cowherds when they all woke up in the morning and found that the child whom they remembered as a girl was really a boy. For this was the only explanation of the mystery that occurred to them. It is said indeed that that morning there was no food to eat in the house of Nanda, for all the pots of milk and curd fell from the hands of the women when they heard the news, in their astonishment and delight. Then thousands of people came, and every one was fed, and wealth was distributed and there was great rejoicing. So this is always kept in India as Nanda's Feast, and on the day before, as the people believe, there is always rain.

But in the stronghold of Kamsa, it was told that morning that a child had been born in the night to Devaki and

Vasudeva. Then was the heart of the tyrant hot within him, and he came down into the dungeons in person, attended by all his guards, that he might with his own hands slay this child, who, it was said, had been born to be his destroyer.

To the King's amazement, however, he found that the child was not a boy at all, but a girl. Had Kamsa been less wicked and tyrannical he would have rested here. A girl could hardly, at the age of twelve, be the slayer of a man. And the prophecy had pointed distinctly to a boy. But evil men are blinded by their own wickedness. The very unexpectedness of the event enraged him, and he put out his hand to seize the babe by the foot, and dash it to pieces against the prison walls. As he touched it, however, to the astonishment of all present, the seeming child slipped from his grasp, and high above their heads rose the shining form of a goddess. "He who shall slay thee, O King, is even now growing to manhood," she said, mockingly, "in the village of Gokula on the far side of the Jamuna," and then, as they looked, the radiant being faded away, and none could tell even the direction in which she had disappeared.

But wrath and mortification filled the heart of Kamsa the Tyrant, and for many a long year there-after he knew no rest, in his burning zeal to out-wit the gods, and end the life of the Child Krishna, ere yet He should be old enough to become his slayer.



## THE DIVINE CHILDHOOD

By the advice of his counsellors, the Tyrant Kamsa, knowing that his future slayer had been born, and was living somewhere within the dominions of Mathura, determined now to send out his emissaries for the killing of all newborn children, everywhere. And he had under his command powerful beings of his own kindred, known as demons, or Asuras, who were able to assume any shape at will, and could fly through the sky.

Some of these, therefore, he sent forth secretly for the slaughter of innocent babes, throughout his dominion. And it came to pass that one evening, as the shadows grew long, the Vampire-nurse Putana, who was one of them, having wandered through cities, villages, and forests, destroying infants, arrived at Gokula. And the form which she assumed to enter the place was that of a woman so resplendent in beauty, that the people supposed her to be some goddess, come to offer worship and benediction at the cradle of their chieftain's son. Going hither and thither as she would, secretly observing the youngest of the children, Putana came finally to the great house of the village, that of Nanda, and entering found the Child Krishna. As she bent over Him, to take Him into her arms, the Babe saw and understood her real nature, and closed His eyes; and in that moment she lifted Him. But the women who were sitting or standing near suspected no evil. They noticed only the apparent sweetness and beauty of the stranger, and never dreamt that this was in truth the dreaded Vampire-nurse, whose caress was death to all babies, and her heart like a sharp sword encased in a hard scabbard. A moment later, and with many endearments, she had begun to feed the child. Now the breast of Putana was full of deadly poison. But the Babe only touched her with His little mouth, apparently giving a single gentle tug, as babies do, and lo!



the very life of the witch was drawn out of her. With a loud cry of rage she fell to the earth, and as she did so, all her beauty dropped away from her, and showed itself to have been only a disguise. Every one, hearing the yell of the dying Vampire, hastened to the spot, but there lay the Divine Child laughing and kicking, as if He never guessed that by a touch of His mysterious strength, the enemy of children had been slain! But when the news reached Kamsa, of the death of his messenger, and the Child that could not be killed, he became sure that Krishna was that very Babe of whom the voice had spoken, and he determined to leave no stone unturned to compass His death.

Never was mortal woman happier than Yashoda, wife and queen of Nanda, and foster-mother of Krishna. Day after day, as the months went by, she held Him in her lap, and fed and played with Him, or soothed Him gently to sleep. For what was He, after all, but a baby? Not even by her, as yet, was it suspected what was His great strength, or who He was. One day she was called away for something, and before going, she turned and laid the Child down on the ground, in the shadow of a disused bullock-cart. It had long stood idle, and had come to be used as a sort of dairy-table, for it was covered now with great jars containing milk for butter and curds. These in their turn were protected from dust with grass and leaves, and over the whole were the bamboo mats that acted as the waggon hood. Here, then, in the shadow lay the Babe, and about Him, in the farmyard, played other children. And now did the Demon Shakata enter into the cart, thinking it would be easy to fall and crush the Infant, by a seeming accident. But the little one who lay there was the Lord Himself! Nothing could deceive or baffle Him. At the very instant when the waggon began to break, He gave a kick with His tiny foot, and lo! the cart, with all that stood on it, was thrown to the other side of the farmyard, and Shakata-Asura, the demon, was killed. Hearing the noise,

people came in astonishment from every part of the farm, and great was their happiness to find the Babe still living. But when they heard from the rest how it had happened, what were they to believe? He was as yet too young even to creep about. Only Yashoda, clasping her Heart's-Joy tight between tears and laughter, felt that there was something here beneath the surface, that they none of them understood. Strange dangers threatened the life of her little one. Wondrous wisdom and strength were hidden within Him. These things to her, His mother, it was easy to accept.

One day, as she nursed Him with all her tenderness, she suddenly felt Him grow as heavy as a mountain, and was obliged to lay Him on the ground. At that very moment, a great black cloud enwrapped them both for an instant, and when it passed on, she saw the Babe Krishna rising higher and higher above her, clinging, as it seemed, to the very throat of a whirlwind. In agony watched the mother, while all about Gokula the air grew black with storm and dust. On swept the hurricane, yet with course impeded, as it seemed, by the weight of the Being it struggled to carry. Moments passed of terrible suspense, in which the distracted mother and weeping women of the village ran hither and thither, as if to find or catch the Boy. Then there came a lull, and down, down, down, into the midst of Gokula, fell the Demon of the Hurricane, with his Baby-Destroyer still holding him by the throat!

Yashoda, indeed, had many curious experiences, and found much to ponder over. When her little Son was old enough to crawl about on all-fours, He became very difficult to keep in order. He would constantly besmear Himself with mud, and even put earth to His lips and eat it. So His gentle foster-mother was compelled to be angry and punish Him. Then the Child cried, but as He opened His mouth, she, watching Him, seemed to be smitten into a trance, for she saw there revealed, as if within Him, all the worlds, in all their manifold gradations of existence. The whole infinite Universe within that one Babe Krishna! And

the mortal, unable to bear the revelation, closed her eyes, trembling, till the kind gods drew over her sight once more the veil of illusion, and she was able to look upon the Divinity before her as if He were nothing but her Son.

The little hands were busy with everything. There was no keeping this rogue out of mischief. So one day, when Yashoda was at work about the house, she tied about the Child a long rope, which was attached, at its other end, to an old and broken axle of a cart-wheel, and thus protected, left Him to play alone. Not far off stood two ancient trees, with a tiny gap between them. But Yashoda, leaving Him, had no fear for her Baby, for His tether was long and the axle heavy. He could play and scramble and crawl, she thought, to His naughty little heart's content, and yet never be able to move very far from where she had put Him.

This was reckoning, however, without her host; for when no one was near, crawling here and crawling there, the child actually managed to creep between the two great trees! Then on and on He went, dragging His rope and its axle after Him, till at last the weight was wedged tightly in the gap. At this He gave a slight jerk, and suddenly, without more ado, those two lords of the forest fell with a crash, and Krishna near by, on His hands and knees, was found laughing quietly, not the least afraid!

But now a strange thing befell. Out of those trees, in the presence of every one—for all had run to see what was happening, thinking, in fact, that a thunderbolt had fallen—came two bright spirits, telling how for ages they had lain imprisoned there beneath a spell, that could only be lifted by the touch of the Lord. Then they offered salutations, and worshipped the Liberator of Souls, before they disappeared.

Another day, after the Child had begun to toddle, a woman came to the farmstead with fruit to sell, and Krishna, desiring to have some, ran into the house, and returned to her, carrying the necessary handful of rice,

but letting it stream out in all directions between His open fingers. The fruit-seller was so pleased with the look of the Child, and so touched with His feeble effort to pay her justly, that she insisted on giving Him all the fruit He wanted, and could hardly be persuaded to take anything in return. Her scruples, however, were overcome, and she consented to accept the little one's offering, when behold, as He poured the remaining rice into the knotted corner of her veil—tied like a bag for the carrying of it—each grain, touching the cloth, became a jewel!

Another of the little fellow's tricks was to make His way into the dairies of His village friends and help Himself, on behalf of His friends the monkeys and birds, to cream and butter and other good things. Every one liked Him to do this, yet they felt that it would never do to let Krishna grow up a thief! So the dairy-wives came in a body, and complained to Yashoda. Then Yashoda scolded Him, and at last took her churning-rope to tie the little hands together. But her whole churning-rope was two finger-lengths too short to make a knot about the wrists of her Boy! Then she found another, and tying them together, tried again, then another, and another, and another. But it was all to no purpose. All the ropes of the farmhouse, added to one another, were not long enough to tie the hands of the Lord of the Universe. Then a great awe fell upon Yashoda, and she began to feel the vision of the Universe stealing over her again. But the Child, seeing that His mother was tired, hunting here and there for ropes, and trying to tie His hands, submitted Himself, and became good, and immediately one rope was found enough with which to fasten the little wrists.

And so the time passed, till He was seven or eight years of age. Then the cowherds moved away from Gokula to the forests of Brindavana. And Krishna, being now joined by His elder brother Balarama, was allowed to go daily to the pastures with the other lads tending their father's herds.



## KRISHNA IN THE FORESTS

How happy were the years that Krishna and His brother spent in the forests, for the herd-boys and herd-girls of Gokula and Brindavana! To the herd-girls especially—the Gopis, as they were called—He was at once play-fellow and pet; and Indian poetry is full, to this day, of the memory of His pastimes with them, in those beautiful woods and meadows. There, when the trees were covered with blossoms, and the south wind blew, they would put up swings and play at swinging all day long. Or there would be a game at hide-and-seek amongst the cows and buffaloes feeding quietly; and those who were to be caught would draw attention to their hiding-places, by imitating the cries of peacocks or the quacking of ducks. Sometimes the lads would leap streams with the motions of a frog, or play the game of leap-frog on dry land. Or they would all make a ring about some great tree, and try to capture Krishna, as He darted in and out under their arched arms. Even the grazing animals had a special love for the Lord, and lowed happily, whenever He caressed them, or came near, gathering about Him in a ring, to listen, whenever—standing with feet crossed beneath the beautiful Kadamba tree—He played upon His flute. Some say, indeed, that at such moments the lotus-buds lying on the Jamuna waters opened, and the river itself bent out of its straight course. And it is said that in Brindavana, owing to the presence of the Lord Krishna, the weather never grew too hot, nor did the grass grow thirsty. It was always cool and fragrant; the trees were always in blossom; and a gentle breeze played always upon the foreheads of the cowherds.

One game was played there regularly once a year. It was a game of triumph over Kamsa. For the Tyrant of Mathura had not forgotten his old eagerness to slay the future Avenger of his people, and he continued now and

again to despatch his malicious emissaries to Brindavana, there to work the death of the young Krishna. Once he sent Baka-Asura, the great Crane; and once it was Medhrasura, the Demon-Sheep. It was the death of the latter of these which caused such great rejoicing throughout the whole country-side, that its anniversary has been kept every year, from then till now.

When the spring was at its loveliest, on the eve of the full moon of Phalguna—that most beautiful month of all the twelve—when the fragrance of mango-blossoms filled the air, and red flowers covered the Ashoka tree, and the long delicate buds of the leaf-almond were about to burst into tender green, on this very day, a large ram that had seemed to be feeding quietly in the meadow, saw Krishna coming, and, lowering its head, ran forward to butt Him with its horns. So large was the animal, and so vicious and determined his onset, that the Lord must have been killed on the spot, had he succeeded in touching Him. But that Divine Intelligence was never baffled. Even in the height of a frolic, He could not be found off guard. The young Cowherd waited till the great sheep had almost reached Him. Then, seizing him easily by the neck, He swung him round and round, and finally dashed him against a tree. Possibly the garments of those standing near were stained with the blood of the demon, or it may be that the fury of the hunter came upon them, and they “blooded” one another. However this was, the night is yearly celebrated, by burning a rude image of the demon, put together with sticks and knots of grass. And water coloured with red powder is taken to represent the blood of Medhrasura, and all the members of the family receive this, in blessing, on their heads; and next day in the streets, it is thrown by the boys on the garments of passers-by. Thus is commemorated the rejoicing of the Gopis over the escape of Krishna from the Demon-Sheep.

Many wonderful tales are told of this time in the life of the youth Krishna. One of these is His Victory over the

Snake Kaliya. Another is the story of the Lifting of the Mountain. But most wonderful of all was the love that the Gopis had for Him, as they romped and frolicked and tended the herds in the beautiful forests of Brindavana. It was a love without any selfishness. When Krishna was near, they felt themselves lifted into a golden atmosphere, where all was gaiety and lightness of heart; nothing seemed serious or troublesome; and their happiness bubbled over in the form of gentleness and play. If one were eating some delicious fruit, and suddenly saw the luminous form of Krishna, she would unconsciously offer it, for the next bite, to His lips, instead of to her own.

Yet each was only kinder and more faithful to all others, by reason of this wonderful play. For it is written that the homes of the Gopis never suffered, their husbands and their children never cried on them in vain, they never fled from any duty, in order to indulge in the company of Krishna. And not those of the Gopis only, but also all the humble homes about Brindavana, were made happy by His presence. In truth, Krishna the Cowherd—or Hari, as He was called—was the Lord Himself, and this love of peasant-folk for Him was neither more nor less than the love of human souls for the Divine. None who had ever sported with Him, or listened to His playing of the flute beneath the trees, could bear thereafter to leave that Presence. The souls of all such were bathed in holy peacefulness and joy. But their hands were rendered only the more helpful, their hearts more tender, their feet more eager to run on swift errands of mercy to others, for the fact that in mind and spirit they knew themselves to be playing always with the Divine, in the beautiful form of the Cowherd of Brindavana.

Leader of all the Gopis was Radha, and to her specially was it given to realise this intensity of sweetness. Hers was the frank and instant recognition, the deep understanding, and the constant vision of His glory. And she it was who reached the unutterable depths of sorrow, when the simple joys of that peasant-world could hold Him no longer, and

He left Brindavana for ever, to return to the life and responsibility of kings, freeing His people from the Tyrant of Mathura. Wherefore, because of this wondrous union between the human soul of Radha and the Divine in Krishna, all love has come to be summed up in Their love. And when the Infinite whispers Its secrets to the finite—as happens sometimes to all of us in loving—the moment is expressed, in Indian poetry, as the speech of Krishna, the Cowherd with Radha, leader of the Gopis.



## THE DILEMMA OF BRAHMA

A curious miracle was performed by the Lord Krishna. Having gone to the forest one morning with His companions and their herds, He and they wandered from one beautiful part to another. The sun had not long risen, and the young cowherds were full of happiness. Some played with the dancing shadows, others with the echoes. Some climbed with the monkeys, others stood still like storks or herons, deceiving the very birds themselves, by the perfection of their gestures. Above all, wherever Krishna announced His intention of going, a hundred voices rose in emulation, shouting, "Let me be first! Let me be first!" Suddenly, the cows began to disappear into the mouth of a great open cave, and the boys, as was their duty, when they came up to it, followed them. Krishna was the last to reach the place, but no sooner had He done so, than He saw that what had seemed like a cavern was nothing of the sort, being in reality the mouth of a great serpent-demon, by whom His friends and their cattle had all been swallowed. He further understood that the great jaws remained still motionless and open, because the real object of the demon was to devour Himself, and thereby avenge the deaths of those whom He had already defeated. The lad stood a moment, wondering what to do. His companions and the herds must be delivered. But how? It was only a moment, and He stepped boldly inside the mouth of the monster, and stood there, in front of its throat. The great teeth made to snap down upon Him, and the muscles hastened as though they would contract. But this was not so easy. By dint of His mysterious power, the Lord of the Universe, calling all His concentration to His aid, began to expand and expand within the serpent's mouth. Taller and taller, larger and larger He grew, and with each accretion of size, the demon became fainter and fainter, and the

hopes of His comrades entangled within waxed higher. There He stood in the very mouth of the dragon, and fought for His friends with invisible weapons. The crowning moment came at last. His power reached its zenith. The demon was suddenly disrupted and without strength, and the cowherds with their cows walked back out of the jaws of this living death. And then, before all their eyes, the soul of that evil being arose, and did obeisance to the feet of Krishna, before it passed away, a purified spirit, to the far-off regions of blessedness. For the touch of the Lord ever brought salvation, even though to the body He might mete out death.

Some hours had passed away in this struggle and the consequent rejoicing of the cowherds. Hence, finding a place full of clear sands, near running water, where the black bees hovered over the lotuses, and beautiful birds flew about amongst the branches, and the air was filled with drowsy humming, some one suggested that here they should take their morning meal. The proposal met with acceptance from all, and they sat down on the sands to eat. But, since none could bear to take his eyes off Krishna, the assembly, when it was ranged for eating, looked like a single great lotus, with Him as its centre; and so seated, using flowers and leaves and pieces of fruit and bark as plates, they all, with much merriment, began to feast.

All unknown to them, they were being watched by the God Brahma, who had seen the miracle of the morning, and was minded to play them a trick. He wanted to find out whether the Boy Krishna, who could do such extraordinary things, was in reality human or divine. He suspected Him of being an Incarnation of the God Vishnu, and intended to put the matter to proof.

When the boys, therefore, sat down to eat, the God Brahma quietly drew away their herds of cattle, and shut them up in deep sleep in a mountain cave. The lads looked up suddenly, and saw to their terror that all the cows had disappeared. But Krishna, jumping up, said that

He would find them and drive them back, if only the rest would not disturb themselves. He had no sooner left them, however, to seek for the missing cows, than Brahma took all the herd-boys and herd-girls, and throwing them into the same deep sleep, shut them up also, along with their cattle, in the same cave. And Krishna, returning disappointed, could find no one.

A few moments passed in perplexity, and then He who could see all things, determined that this must be some dilemma proposed by the Creator, and resolved on a course of action.

That night the same number of cows and bullocks and calves were driven into the village as had left it for the forest in the morning. The herd-girls, also, and herd-boys went home, all in their own places. But never had the people loved their children and their animals as they now began to do. It was wonderful, this love that was drawn out by the herds and their keepers. Hitherto, people had been tempted to love the Lord Krishna, and even His brother Balarama, more than their own children. But now, all their hearts were centred in their own homes, and for love of their own children and their own cows, it seemed almost as if they would forget the Lord Himself. In fact, Krishna had made all these out of Himself. All alike were His special manifestation. And He, the Lord, was now present in His own form, in every household and cattle-pen. So matters continued for a whole year.

Now a day of the gods is a year of men, and Brahma, coming at the end of the day, to see what Krishna had done to meet His trick, found, to His amazement, that there were now in the forest as many herds-folk and animals as before. But drawing nearer still, it appeared to Him as if each of these were clothed in the yellow garb, and carried the flute, and wore the circlet with the peacock's feather, just like Krishna. Behind each, moreover, to His piercing sight, shone forth the four arms, with the hands holding discus and mace and conch and lotus. Then was He satis-

fied that the young Cowherd was indeed the God Vishnu Himself, and when He had worshipped Him, and Krishna had resumed into Himself all these His manifestations, He released from the cave, where He had hidden them, the sleeping herdsmen and women and their cattle. And they awoke, knowing not that even a moment had passed. They found themselves seated at their forest-meal, as they had been when they disappeared. And each remembered only the words that had been on his lips, or the food that had been in his hands, at the moment of the vanishing of the cows a whole year before.



## CONQUEST OF THE SNAKE KALIYA

It happened one morning that Balarama was unwell, and could not go to the forest with the cows. Now Yashoda in the night had had a dream that Krishna was drowned in the lake Kaliya. She begged Him, therefore, for that day to stay at home. But His companions were so loth to go without Him, and He pleaded so hard to be allowed to accompany them, that at last her resolution gave way, and she allowed Him to go.

The day was hot, and the cows wandered further afield than usual, and must be followed by the cowherds. Behind all came Krishna, who had been resting with His friends under a shady banyan tree. In this way they arrived at the shores of a certain great lake, and being thirsty, all alike, save Krishna, who had not yet reached them, bent down and drank its water. Now the lake was the Lake Kaliya, made venomous by the poison of the hundred-headed snake Kaliya, who dwelt in it, and when Krishna left the banyan's shade and came up to His comrades, they all lay apparently dead on its shores. A few minutes passed, however, and the tears of Krishna brought them all back to life. For His mercy and love could not fail to give life and strength, and He poured them out in abundance over His fainting friends.

Now such was the poison of the Lake Kaliya that nothing could remain alive near its banks. The very birds, as they flew across it, fell down dead. The grass and the plants in its neighbourhood became withered and burnt up. The forest appeared to have retreated from its edge. And the only living thing to be seen was a vigorous Kadamba tree, on whose branches an eagle—the Bird of God—had once perched. Even the mist and spray that might rise from the lake had the effect of poison. As Krishna, therefore, looked on the surrounding desolation, and realised the danger from

which His friends had just escaped, His heart grew hot within Him, and the thought arose in His mind that He would rid the world of the poisonous serpent Kaliya, with his hundred heads, and deliver men and animals and plants from his terror. He climbed, therefore, to the top of the Kadamba tree, and making His way out to the end of a long branch, He stood there a moment, and then, with a great leap, dived into the lake. His friends the cowherds stood breathless on the shore as He splashed about in the water, striking it with His fists and creating whirlpools, in order to attract the attention of the snake. It was not long before He succeeded, and Kaliya, greatly enraged at this agitation of the waters, raised his terrible cluster of heads to see who it was that troubled his peace. No sooner did he see Him, than with coil after coil of his huge body he wrapped the youthful swimmer round, and drew Him down to the bottom of the lake, there to sting Him to death at leisure. Holding Him thus in his embrace, and darting his heads here and there at the body of Krishna, he gave bite after bite. But a strange thing happened. Instead of entering the flesh of the Cowherd, whatever poison-tooth touched His skin would immediately break!

The minutes as they went by seemed to those on the shore like hours, and still the combatants remained under water, and the Lord had not once appeared to His friends. At the same time terrible omens began to be seen in Brindavana. The rolling of thunder was heard from a clear sky. Meteors were seen, though it was daylight, to shoot across the sky, and people found themselves to be trembling without any cause, as though with fear. Even in the distant pastures, Nanda and the older cowherds noticed these things, and, fearing that some evil had befallen Krishna, began to drive the cows homeward to the village. Then, taking Yashoda and Balarama, and following the lads, by means of the footprints of Krishna, they came all together to the shores of the Lake Kaliya.

Still Krishna was under water, and His friends and

comrades were about to abandon all hope. Finding things at this pass, Yashoda was eager at least to follow Him, and was about to throw herself headlong into the fatal lake. But Balarama, who had not been in the least discouraged, implored her to wait, while he asked Krishna to give them some sign. He was sure that his Brother would defeat the serpent, and at any rate, when they should know that it was hopeless, it would be time enough to take desperate measures. She consented, and he, climbing the Kadamba tree, and standing on its outstretching branch, even as Krishna had done, put his horn to his lips and sounded a call which would mean to Krishna, "For the sake of your mother make some sign that you still live!" Krishna, standing easily in the coils of the serpent, and allowing him to exhaust himself in blind and useless anger, heard the call of the horn, and, as a token that He still lived, threw His flute out of the lake to the shore.

Alas, the signal had an effect the very opposite of that intended! All were quite sure that Krishna would never, while He yet lived, part from His flute. Despair, therefore, reigned supreme. But Balarama again blew upon his horn. "Show us that you live!" was his message this time, and immediately on the surface of the lake they could see the peacock's feather on Krishna's crown. Again and again they saw it. For He was standing now on the serpent's head. Then He danced lightly on his neck till all the heads, save one, hung broken and powerless, and the great snake Kaliya was to be feared no more.

At this point the wives and children of the serpent lord intervened and ranged themselves before Krishna, begging Him to spare the life of His enemy. They implored Him and worshipped Him, and pleaded so well, that at last He said, "Let it then be even so! Do thou, O Kaliya, with thy one head, depart with all these thy kindred and thy subjects unto the ocean! Thou art banished for ever from this lake, whose sweet waters thou shalt defile no longer. Yet, out of My pity, do I grant thy life!"

Then Kaliya, bruised and trembling, answered, "Alas, O Lord, as I depart unto the ocean, that bird of Thine will see me. And what Thou hast spared he will assuredly destroy!"

Then answered Krishna gently, "Nay, My friend! When the Eagle sees My footprint on thy head he will bid thee go in peace!"

And so the Lord, having conquered the Hundred-headed, returned to the shore, and ever after were the waters of that lake sweet as nectar.

But when Yashoda and His friends had embraced and welcomed Him, the day was already far spent, and they saw that if they attempted to return to the village, they would only be overtaken by the darkness on their way. They withdrew with the cows, therefore, within the forest, and determined to spend the night under the banyan tree near by.

Suddenly, as they slept, some one smelt fire, and with cries of "Krishna!" and "Balarama!" they all woke one another. A terrible forest-fire had broken out, and was coming nearer and nearer, surrounding them on every side. But Krishna stood up in the midst of them smiling, and hushed their terror as if they had been children. Bidding them shut their eyes, and on no account to look at Him, He stood there and drew the fire in with His hands, drinking it up in three great mouthfuls. And none would have known it, but Yashoda, opening her eyes slightly before the time, saw through her eyelashes His last draught. So once more the cowherds slept in peace, and when morning dawned returned to their own village with the herds.



## THE LIFTING OF THE MOUNTAIN

Now it came to pass, year after year, at the end of the hot weather,\* that the cowherds of Brindavana would offer a great sacrifice to Indra, God of the Sky and King of Deities. And this sacrifice, it was believed, availed to make Him send the yearly rains, and was efficacious also to make Him restrain them, that they should not be sufficient to wash away the forests and make the Jamuna overflow her banks. But on a certain year it happened that the Lad Krishna noticed the preparations that were being made for this sacrifice. And His heart was hot within Him, for He was born to put an end to the worship of Indra and the weather-deities, and to establish in its place, faith in Narayana, God, Himself, Lord of the souls, not of the fortunes of men. The Youth Krishna therefore reasoned with Nanda, His foster-father, and with the other cowherds, urging them to realise that good harvests or bad came to them out of their own destiny, the fruit of causes long past, and could not be given or withholden by Indra or any other of the ancient gods. "Surely, if ye must worship," He cried, in His earnestness, "it were better to worship this mountain under whose shelter we dwell. Let us celebrate a feast in honour of the forest and the priesthood and the cows. To do this were indeed well, but to worship Indra for the sake of harvests is but childish nonsense and old wives' tales!" Carried away by His pleadings, the cowherds placed themselves entirely at His will, and that year's merry-making was dedicated to the mountain, to which they owed home and food and all that they enjoyed.

But not without a struggle would the God Indra resign His accustomed offerings. None of the daring words of

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\* The hot weather in northern India means the months of May and June. In July begin the heavy tropical rains, which last until the beginning of October.

Krishna were hidden from Him. He was present at every conference. He heard the fiery arguments, and He saw the impression moreover that was made on the minds of the simple country-folk. Indra knew that if He did not now defeat the plans of the Lord Krishna, then were the hearts of the people lost for ever to Him, and all the shining deities of the sky. Therefore, to punish the presumption of the cowherds—who had dared, at the bidding of Krishna, to enter on the rainy season without first making sacrifices to Him—the God Indra sent down such rain as had never been seen in Brindavana within the memory of man. Down, down, down it poured, hour after hour, day after day, without one moment of intermission; and the river began to overflow, and the trees to be washed away; and it looked as if the people, and their herds, and their villages would all be lost, nay, as if the very world itself would be drowned in one great flood. But to Krishna all the anger of Indra was a very little thing. When He saw the danger of His people, He simply called them together, and, telling them to bring with them their cattle and their tools, and all their worldly possessions, He lifted up the mountain itself, and, holding it up with a single finger, He made them all take shelter beneath it! And so He stood, protecting them, seven days and nights, till even the mighty Indra was exhausted and repentant, and ready to offer worship to Him Who was greater than all the ancient gods together. Then all the herdsmen and women came forth once more from their refuge, and the sun shone brightly upon them, and the mountain was restored to its own place, and even the spirit of the Jamuna was appeased, and her flow became gentle and untroubled as before. But one by one came the old men and prostrated themselves before Krishna, saying, “Child! In sooth we know not Who You are—but whoever and whatever You be, to You be our salutation! To You be our worship!”

## THE RETURN TO MATHURA

One by one the seasons had gone by, and Krishna was now close on twelve years of age. One by one He had foiled all the attempts made on His life by Kamsa. He had humbled the pride of Indra. He had subdued the snake Kaliya. He had swallowed the forest fire. He had wrestled with a great black bull and slain him. He had defeated every demon sent against Him. And Kamsa in Mathura began to think that the time of his own danger was nigh at hand, and it were well that he should take steps to have the Son of Devaki destroyed before his eyes. The emissaries had doubtless been lax. Or they had been taken at a disadvantage in unknown places, or there had been no means of ordering the warfare by the common rules of combat. It was desirable that now all this should be reversed. Let Krishna fight the King's wrestlers in full court. Let the lists, familiar to them, be new to Him. Let the whole assembly look on and see fair play. It would be hard, thought Kamsa, if, under all these conditions, he could not compass the defeat and death of the young cowherd. It was therefore decided that a great sacrifice should be made in Mathura, with many days' celebration of games and feasting, and that to this the cowherds should be bidden, with Nanda, as the King's vassals, and Krishna and His brother Balarama as his kinsmen.

The darkness had fallen, and all the evening tasks were going forward, when the messenger of the King arrived at Brindavana, carrying the invitation of Kamsa to the chieftain Nanda. The cowherds were wanderers by habit, and to them it was no great undertaking to move from place to place, milking their cows and making butter and curds daily on the march. Many times already had they gone to Mathura to offer the annual tribute, and they were familiar with the large green reserves outside the city, which were

known as the king's parks, where they and their herds would find abundance of room. Long before dawn, therefore, they had set to work to prepare the gifts which would be sent out in carts for offering to the King, and to make themselves and their camp ready for the removal. But first they sat for many hours about the newly arrived guest, talking, late into the night, of the childhood and youth of Krishna and Balarama, and of the dreams and thoughts that the face of the Lord was potent to stir in the hearts of His devotees. For the messenger of Kamsa was an uncle of the two lads, and he knew and worshipped the divine character of his nephew. And many felt, as the embers of the evening cooking-fires died down, and even the logs that had been set alight afterwards turned to ashes, and the blackness of the forest became filled with the whispers of night—many felt in their hearts that the happiness of those early years was over for them. The great world without had need of the Lord, and the hillsides of Brindavana would know Him no more.

Krishna and Balarama were driven to the city in state in the chariot of the royal messenger. But on reaching the gates of Mathura they insisted on alighting. They would like, they said, to enjoy the sights of the city in freedom for the rest of the day, and to spend the night with their friends from the forest. They would not fail on the morrow to present themselves at the tournament. Already they were attired in accordance with their true rank, as young nobles about to be received for the first time at court. And as they went about the streets of Mathura, they were everywhere treated with the respect due to them. Thus they made their way to the place which had been prepared for the next day's spectacle.

All round were ranged the seats and galleries for different sections of the spectators. One division had been prepared for the cowherds, another for the royal clan of the Vrishnis, a third for the citizens and townfolk of Mathura, and so on. High at one end of the lists towered the royal seat of Kamsa, draped and garlanded and decked with banners



and auspicious ornaments. Opposite were the arrangements being made for the public sacrifice. And near to the throne, in a kind of shrine, well guarded, was displayed a sacred object, no other than a great bow, said to be divine, which was regarded as the amulet and talisman of the house of Kamsa. Whenever and wherever the King appeared in state, this bow was exhibited beside him, as a perpetual challenge and reminder to all the world, that if any would dispossess him of his crown, they must first bend and break this weapon of the gods. Now the bow was of such strength that no living man could bend it. And none had ever been known even to lift it alone.

None of the guards noticed anything unusual about the two youths who had entered and were strolling about the lists. Crowds were constantly coming and going, inspecting the arrangements for the next day's festivities, and not yet had the Lord signalled Himself by putting forth His divine power. Suddenly, however, before any one could prevent Him, Krishna leapt featly to the royal dais, and went forward to seize the great bow. The guards threw themselves on Him, to snatch it back, but He lifted it lightly above them, with His left hand only, and withdrawing backwards, stood a moment to string it, and, then—closer and closer He smilingly drew the two great ends, till snap! went the mighty weapon, even, says the chronicler, as a stick of sugarcane is broken in two by a maddened elephant.

Rigid with terror, every one had drawn back to see the bowstring drawn, but at the sound of its breaking the whole scene changed. Even Kamsa, it is said, in his distant apartments, heard the dread echo, and, guessing its cause, hastened to despatch men to seize Him Who had thus threatened his glory with defeat. But Krishna, armed only with the two fragments of the weapon, drove back all His adversaries. Some He merely repulsed, others He slew. And thus, leaving the shattered talisman behind Him, returned to the lists by the way He had left them, and, rejoining Balarama, went quietly out of the hall.

But Kamsa lay wakeful through all the hours of that long night, or when he slept was pursued by evil dreams. Every now and then he would see as it were himself, now without a head, and again riddled with holes. It seemed to him, too, as if he walked and left no footprint. He had shivered when he heard the sound of the breaking of the bow; but afterwards he had spoken of it lightly amongst his friends, as an unfortunate joke played by a couple of strangers. In his secret soul, however, he knew it for the sound of coming doom. He knew that the prophecies of his ancestors were true, and that with the appearance of one who could bend it, the power would depart from him and from his line.

As morning dawned, it appeared to Kamsa as if he could hardly wait for the beginning of the tournament that was to decide all. Hastily, he gave orders for the completion of the preparations. The last decorations were added; drums and tabors sounded; the people began to fill their galleries; the royal guests took their places; then Kamsa, surrounded by his counsellors, ascended the royal dais, and took his seat in the very midst of the circle of kings. His appearance was full of splendour, but within, his heart was shaken with anxiety. Then the trumpet sounded the challenge, and the King's wrestlers entered the arena in order, and stood in their places, waiting to see what combatants would offer themselves. Finally, the cowherds entered in procession, headed by Nanda and other chieftains, and, offering the tribute they had brought, at the royal feet, paid public homage, and passed on to the seats arranged for them. And now, at last, all waited together for the appearance of those who might desire to try their skill with the King's fighters. But none knew that at the door by which any such must come in, Kamsa had secretly stationed an elephant, who had been goaded into fury till he would rush on those who might seek to enter, and trample them to death,

With dawn that morning Krishna and His brother Balarama had risen, bathed, and offered worship, and now, hear-

ing the call of the drums and trumpets, they came to the hall of sacrifice to be present at the tournament. As they entered the portals, however, they saw an immense elephant rushing furiously down upon them, goaded by his keeper. Quick as lightning Krishna girded His garments tightly about Him, and stood waiting for the onset. The elephant caught Him with its trunk; but He struck it in the foot and released Himself. For a moment the angry beast lost sight of Him, then it caught Him again, and the same manoeuvre was repeated. At this moment, as if the thing were a mere joke, Krishna caught the mighty creature by the tail, and dragged it backwards, as some great bird might drag a snake. Again He darted backwards and forwards, to right and left, following the turns of the infuriated elephant, even as the cowherds of Brindavana would follow the movements of a turning and wheeling calf. Now He faced it and struck it with His hands, and, again running hither and thither, He threw it to the earth with a kick from His foot. The elephant recovered its footing, however, and, again goaded by its keeper, made straight for Krishna. He, seeing now for the first time how overflowing must be the cup of Kamsa's iniquity, to have given such orders for His undoing, muttered, between closed teeth, "Tyrant! thine end must indeed be near at hand!" and gave Himself finally to the killing of the beast and its keeper.

The great trunk would have wound itself about Him, but He vaulted lightly by its means to the creature's head, and then, placing one foot there, and one on the lower jaw, He forced the mouth open, and, bending down, drew forth its immense tusks, and with these slew both elephant and man. A few minutes later, girded as He had been for the struggle, and bearing the tusks of the creature in His hands, Krishna entered the arena, followed by Balarama, His brother.

How different were the feelings of those who looked upon Him in that moment! The soldiers saw in Him, it is said, a mighty general. Women saw a beautiful youth. The people saw simply a great man. Nanda and his subjects

saw the beloved Cowherd of Brindavana. Devaki and Vasudeva, from their place near the King's person, saw their Babe of one stormy night twelve years before. Saints saw the Lord Himself appear on earth in human form. And Kamsa, on his high seat trembled, for in the beautiful Lad before him, without armour, weapons, or followers, he, seated on his throne and surrounded by his armies, saw only his own destined Destroyer.

In that moment, all that Krishna had already done rose up before the minds of those who looked upon Him. All the fame of the demons He had destroyed, from Putana the Vampire-nurse to Arishta the great black bull, came before them. The stories of how Indra and Brahma had done Him homage were remembered. And his great labours for the protection of men, the lifting of the mountain, the defeating of the serpent, and a dozen others— were whispered from mouth to mouth. Thus, summing up in that one instant the past and the present, Krishna stood on the threshold of the lists, awaiting the challenge.

Chanura, chief of the King's wrestlers, came forward and sounded it. It was, he announced, the royal command that the two brothers who stood before them should offer an exhibition of the famous wrestling of Brindavana cowherds, and, to gratify their sovereign in this matter, he himself was willing to give them battle.

Now Krishna well understood the trap that was laid for Himself and His brother, in the smooth and honeyed words of the challenge thus delivered. They were to make a spectacular display only, for the amusement of the on-lookers, of the strange ways of wrestling in vogue amongst the cowherds. But their adversaries would have secret orders from Kamsa, to put forth full strength at some unexpected moment, and kill them both, as if by accident. Instead of giving the counter-challenge direct, therefore, He answered, in the same complimentary style that the wrestler had used, that if the King really wished to see the wrestling of the cowherds, he would prove the fact by giving Himself and



His brother, as their antagonists, boys of their own age.

At this Chanura lost all patience. "You say this?" he cried—"You, whose hands but now were wet with the blood of an infuriated elephant, whose strength was as that of a thousand! Your strength is not that of mere lads. You are amongst the most powerful beings in the world!"

All present understood this as a call to mortal combat, and a thrill of horror went round the assembly as they saw the two young men, little used as they must be to the methods of cities, confronted by the skill, strength, and experience of a whole bevy of famous wrestlers of the court. Devaki and Vasudeva, from their places above, made no secret of the terror which the fight inspired in them. Only in the gallery of the cowherds were there seen bright smiles and untroubled countenances. For there alone were some who could guess the powers of the Divine Wrestlers to foil their combatants.

Chanura and Mushtika then addressed themselves to the fight with Krishna and Balarama. Each couple fought by all known modes of combat. Each found in his foe a worthy antagonist. At last Chanura drew back, and then, with arms out and fists clenched, came down with all his strength on Krishna, even as a hawk might swoop down on its prey. But Krishna waited calmly for his blow, and seemed to feel it no more than an elephant when struck by a garland of flowers. Then, at last, He seized Chanura by the arms, and threw him to the ground dead. And the fall of the great wrestler was as the loss of the thunderbolt from the hand of Indra Himself. As for Mushtika, Balarama slew him carelessly, with a blow of his left hand. Another pair of gladiators came forward and offered battle, and again a third, but only to be slain, each in his turn, by his chosen foe. As the third combat ended, however, all the rest of the wrestlers fled, and the cowherds could no longer be restrained. They rose from their places in a body, and, crowding round Krishna and Balarama, embraced them, amidst mingling of laughter and shouts of triumph, and then all together, with

tinkling of their ornaments, began, to the great amusement of the assembly, to dance one of the forest dances!

But the eyes of Kamsa had been growing larger and larger with terror, as one by one he had seen his wrestlers slain. At the end of the third combat he had marked the sudden flight of the whole remaining staff of gladiators. And now the fight, that to him was so serious, was degenerating into a harmless and unseemly revel, with the sympathy of all those around him, whose hearts ought, as he felt, to have been with him!

The King rose to his feet, and, at first choking with rage, but afterwards in clear, loud tones, silenced the trumpets and called to his guards—"Drive out these youths, and arrest and bind the chieftain Nanda, with all his followers! Let Vasudeva here be slain! Slay Ugrasena my father and his attendants, and all with them who are the friends of Krishna! Slay! Slay!"

Before the King's orders had been comprehended by any other, almost before he had resumed his seat, Krishna had leapt to the royal dais—truly, it had been foolhardy, by thus attacking all who were dear to Him, so to provoke the Protector of the Universe! Seeing Krishna so close, and knowing that the moment long dreaded was come upon him, Kamsa rose to his feet and drew his sword. But the Cowherd grasped him by the hair of his head, and at the touch his crown fell off. Then down from the dais jumped the youth, bearing the King with Him, powerless in His grasp. He threw him to the ground in the arena, and a moment later dragged him all round it, even, says the historian, "as a lion might drag a dead elephant," that all his subjects might see that their King was slain. Meanwhile, the eight younger brothers of Kamsa rose in his defence, and would, if they could, have slain Krishna with their own hands. But each, as he threw himself forward, was met by Balarama with a blow of his club that laid him dead.

Then came a scene of weeping. Even those who had

hated Kamsa were struck with consternation and pity, and all the royal women came, each to lament at the side of her dead husband. But Krishna and Balarama went forward quietly to find their parents, Devaki and Vasudeva, and when they had struck off their fetters—still worn at Kamsa's orders, though they sat amongst the royal guests—they touched their feet with their heads, as dutiful children. But Devaki and Vasudeva, it is said, recognising these sons of theirs as the Lord Himself, stood before them with folded hands, until there fell upon their minds once more the veil of Maya, and they could forget their greatness, to offer them the love and tenderness of long-lost parents.

## KRISHNA PARTHA SARATHI, CHARIOTEER OF ARJUNA

THE Lord Krishna never afterwards returned from Mathura to Brindavana. His life became that of a prince and the adviser of princes, though He never occupied the throne Himself. Henceforth He lived in the palaces and courts and council-chambers of monarchs, and sorrow dwelt eternally in the heart of Radha.

Once more, indeed, or so it is said, was He seen by His peasant friends. For they, unable longer to endure His loss, made pilgrimage to a great sacrifice announced by Him. It was that time of year when crops are harvested, and earth lies fallow for a while, and men may rest. Then did these simple folk make bold to enter to royal *demesne* and find their Friend. And He, when He heard that they had come and were asking for Him, was glad at heart. With all state and dignity were they brought into the hall of audience, and Krishna, according to the wont of kings, dressed in the robes and jewels of a prince, came there to receive them.

But, strange to say, the country yokels would not look at Him! With eyes cast on the ground, or heads averted, stood these herdsmen and women of Brindavana, uttering not one word, casting not one glance, in the direction of the Prince Who stood before them! Then Krishna understood the desire of their hearts, and going out of their presence for a moment, He put off the robes and jewels of state, and, smiling, came back to them, clad in the simple garments of the cowherds. On His head now was the tiny circlet, with the peacock's feather in the front. In His right hand He carried the flute. And His feet were bare. And when they saw Him in this, the beloved form of earlier days, the hearts of those country-folk were glad. Calling Him again to play upon His flute to them, they romped and played and sang all day with Him amongst the royal gardens, even as



of old in the meadows and woods of Brindavana. How they rejoiced in calling to mind the happy past! "Ah!" they would sing, "now we cannot see You, for You are on the elephant. But say, do You remember the grazing of the cows? Now, how can we talk with You, You who wear the diadem? But tell us, what have You to say about Your stealing of the butter?" And so in a kind of hide-and-go-seek of happy memories, the hours were passed, and Krishna was once more a peasant amongst peasants. For He, the Lord, is ever the same unto His devotees, and appears unto each one of them in that very form for which his inmost heart cries out.

Those were stirring days in India, and the position of Krishna in the powerful Vrishni State, placed him in the front of affairs. Kings sought His approval and the alliance of His people. He built the splendid city of Dwaraka on the seacoast. His presence was desired at every tournament and assembly. Under his guidance the Vrishnis and their government became one of the most important factors in the life of the period. They grew indeed to such strength that Krishna Himself is said to have seen the grave danger to the national life in the existence of so strong a military class as their nobles formed, and to have sought in His own mind for means of bringing this danger to an end. It was never His way, however, to interfere in affairs, in His own proper person, and in the assertion of His own will. Rather did He look on at the world as if it were all a play which He was watching. Sometimes, at most, He would remove an obstacle, so that the will of the players might have unimpeded scope. In this way He allowed events to work themselves out, striving ever to aid the course of destiny, though this leads in the end to the self-destruction of all things.

These were the days in which the Kurus, and their cousins, the Pandavas, strove for the mastery of India. The bitter-minded Duryodhana, under his blind old father, Dhritarashtra, strove to make himself suzerain of all India

in the capital city of Hastinapura. Unfortunately, however, this meant usurpation of the sovereign rights of his knightly cousins, the five Pandavas, who had been brought up with him and his brothers, as members of the family. Because he wished to be sole monarch, and also because the heroic accomplishments of these knights made him jealous, Duryodhana stooped to engage in many plots against the lives and possessions of the Pandavas. At one time they were compelled to hide, with their mother, in the house of a potter, and it was there that Krishna met the five brothers, and became their friend. The event happened thus.

There was a princess named Draupadi in one of the northern kingdoms, who was famous for her beauty and the greatness of her character. Now when the Swayamvara, or bridal choice, of Draupadi was proclaimed, and all the illustrious knights in India crowded to the city of her father to compete for her hand, Krishna, who was a near relative, was amongst the kings and princes assembled as guests of the family, to look on at the marriage ceremonies.

Everything was to depend, on this occasion, on the shooting of an arrow at a given target from a certain great bow. Only those who were by birth eligible for the hand of the princess were allowed to compete, and the victor was to be proclaimed the chosen husband of Draupadi. Amongst the candidates were many of India's greatest names, Duryodhana himself was there, eager to win the bride of that day. And the penetrating eye of Krishna, from His place beside Draupadi's father, detected in the lists five brothers, dressed as Brahmins, whose bearing was more knightly, and their build more heroic, than those of any others. "What should you say," He whispered to the bride's father, "if you should prove to be the far-famed Pandavas, and their Brahmin dress only a disguise?" In good sooth, it was even so, and one of these brothers it was—Arjuna, the third of them—who shot his arrow into the centre of the target, and succeeded in winning the royal bride. But when the five brothers had taken her to the potter's house, Krishna and

His brother Balarama followed them, secretly in the evening, and ascertained that they were, as He had thought, the Pandava heroes. Then He gave them His blessing, saying, "May your prosperity increase, even as fire hidden in a cave spreads outwards." And from this time the fortunes of the Pandavas began once more to grow.

In sooth, it was not strange that Krishna should, at the first glance, have recognised these heroes. For Arjuna, the third brother, was that soul who had been born for the express purpose of recognising His divinity, and by this fact sharing His glory. One of Arjuna's names was Partha, and Krishna is known, in the south of India, as Partha-Sarathi, the Charioteer of Arjuna.

Many times during the ensuing years did these two friends visit one another, now in the forest and again in the palace, and hold deep converse together on matters concerning the soul and God. Deep was the trust of Arjuna in Krishna's insight into those affairs of men and nations through which the higher laws find visible expression. And he, with all his brothers, and Draupadi, and their whole household, worshipped and loved the Lord Krishna, holding Him to be the Saviour of men.

It is told, indeed, of this period in their lives that a certain wicked man was the enemy of the Pandavas, and, in order to obtain power to conquer them, he went and lived for some time on the banks of the Ganges, there offering prayers and great penances to Shiva, whose other name is Mahadeva, the Great God. At last the austerities practised by this man became so great and manifold, that they could not fail of their accomplishment, and Shiva appeared in a vision to His worshipper. "Speak!" commanded He. "Tell me what is the boon that thou demandest of Me!"

"Even that in battle I may defeat the five Pandavas, standing each in his chariot of war!" answered the man.

But Shiva smiled and shook His head. "The thing that thou askest, O mortal, is impossible. Listen, and I will tell unto thee," said He, "who is Arjuna."

And then the Great God revealed to His worshipper the true nature of the hero Arjuna. He was, He said, the twin soul, Nara, of Krishna, the incarnation of Narayana Himself. And as to Krishna, said Mahadeva, "It is even for the destruction of the wicked and for the preservation of religion that He hath taken His birth among men in this warrior race. It is no other than Vishnu the Preserver, who goeth amongst men by the name of Krishna. Hear, O thou mortal, the nature of Him Whom all the worlds worship, Him whom the learned describe as without beginning and without end, unborn and divine! They call Him 'Krishna the Unconquerable, armed with conch-shell, discus, and mace, adorned with the emblem of a curl of hair, divine, clad in silken robes of yellow hue, and chief of all those who are versed in the art of war.' Arjuna the Pandava is protected by this Krishna. That glorious being, of the lotus eyes and of infinite power, that slayer of hostile heroes, riding in the same chariot with Partha, protecteth him. Arjuna, therefore, is invincible. Even the gods could not resist his power." In such words as these did Shiva Himself preach the glory of Krishna, Who was the Incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver, foretelling the day when He would act on the battlefield as the charioteer of Arjuna and accord to him the divine protection.

At last there came a crisis in the affairs of the country, and between the rival branches of the royal house, and Krishna entered upon that work of restoring the true sovereign and establishing in the land the rule of righteousness, for which He had taken His birth amongst men. He chose the moment of a royal wedding, when the kings of many kingdoms were gathered together, with the Pandavas amongst them, to lay the question of the future before all. The Pandavas had a second time been exiled from their home and kingdom for some thirteen years, in discharge of a gambling debt. But now the thirteen years were ended, and it was time that the restoration of their realm should



be made by Duryodhana, in fulfilment of his own promises, publicly given.

So quietly did Krishna state the case of the Pandavas and so much allowance did He make for the errors of Duryodhana, that one of His hearers took up the tale, and restated it on behalf of the Pandavas, at the same time offering his own alliance, and calling upon his friends to give theirs also, for the re-establishment of the five brothers. Fired by this generous enthusiasm, it was agreed that Duryodhana should be called upon to make restitution, but that, if he refused, the assembled kings should hold themselves in readiness to form an army, for the purpose of forcing him to do so.

The organisation of the Pandava army for this war fell almost entirely into the hands of Krishna. Yet so modest was His work and so restrained His methods, that it seemed almost as if plans and combinations made themselves. At the very beginning of the preparations, Duryodhana and Arjuna both went to Him to ask for His alliance, for Duryodhana also knew His divine character. On reaching the palace, they were told that He was asleep. They went forward, however, and entered His sleeping-chamber, to await His awakening. Duryodhana arrived first, and seated himself near the head of the bed on a fine seat. Arjuna stood waiting at the foot, in an attitude of reverence.

When Krishna opened His eyes, His first glance fell on Arjuna. Duryodhana then spoke, expressing his desire for the help of Krishna in the coming campaign, and adding that, as he had entered His presence first, it would be fair to promise it to himself. Krishna smiled and answered that in this matter He thought the claims were equal, since He had seen Arjuna first. He added, moreover, that, in matters of choice, it was customary to let the younger choose first. He desired to refuse no prayer that should be made to Him, but in this case He had two alternatives to propose. He could give to one of the combatants, He said, an army consisting of some tens of thousands of soldiers, ready armed and

equipped. To the other He could promise only His own presence, unarmed, and resolved not to fight. Then He waited to let each of the two knights decide his own destiny; for well did He know that one who had been so blinded by wrath and desire as to strive to keep the possessions of another, could not at the same time be so discriminating as to choose the Divine Person for his sole strength and stay. Even as He had foreseen, Arjuna, in the faltering voice of devotion, begged for His presence beside him, as his unarmed charioteer, while Duryodhana was fully satisfied that his prayer had been answered when he received the promise of the services of an army of fighting men.

When the hosts of the Pandavas had been duly organised, when their friends and troops were all enrolled, and their plans made for battle, then Krishna went to the court of the Kurus to try and obtain from them overtures of peace. He failed, however, and thenceforth there was nothing before the country but the dark cloud of war.

On the great plain of Kurukshetra stood the two armies drawn up in order, and facing each other. The Pandavas were ranged under Yudhishtira, their monarch, and eldest of the five brothers, over whose head waved the umbrella of pure white and ivory. Next in rank came the gigantic Bhima, whose strength was such that when still a lad he could hold any ten of the Kurus under water at the same time. Third stood Arjuna, the mighty archer, in his chariot of war, with the Divine Krishna as his charioteer; and this chariot was regarded as the centre of the force, Krishna and Arjuna being its leaders. Fourth and fifth were the royal twins, Nakula and Sahadeva. Each of these princes was surrounded by his own section of the army. His chariot was drawn by two steeds, with flowing mane and tail, and fiery eyes. Over each warrior waved his pennon, carrying his own cognisance—Arjuna's a monkey, another an elephant rope, a third a lion's tail, and so on. Each had with him his favourite weapons, and carried in his hand the Shankha, or conch-shell, with which to sound the trumpet of battle.

On the opposite side, in the centre of the army, Duryodhana appeared, riding on an elephant, beneath the umbrella of state. At the head of his forces under a banner bearing the device of a palm-tree, stood Bhishma, their generalissimo, clad in white armour, driven by white horses, and looking, says the ancient chronicler, "like a white mountain." Behind them was Drona with red horses, and the heroic Karna, waiting to succeed to the command on the death of Bhishma.

For this event, Krishna and Arjuna had been born. Battle is terrible, and more terrible than any other is civil warfare. The occasion is great. Thousands of men, of different classes and countries, with their peculiar customs, dress, and armour, are gathered together, all with their attention concentrated on a single object. Music and trumpets and the noises of anger and struggle combine to exalt the spirits of all engaged in combat. The intoxication of victory comes upon men, and they die, in that mood where life and death appear as one. But on the battlefield of Kurukshetra the leaders on either side were the nearest and dearest kindred of those on the other. Bhishma, the Kuru general, was the grandfather of the Pandavas. Drona, the guardian of the forces, was their beloved teacher. On all hands could be seen one and another who in happier days had been friend, comrade, and playfellow. Yet these were the men who must be killed by them. Unless they killed them, there could be no end to the contest. It was well known, for instance, that Bhishma must die by the hand of Shikhandin, and many similar dooms hung over the heads of different houses. Yet what would be even the empire of Hastinapura, without Bhishma, without Drona, without the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra, whose friendship and energy had hitherto made its life and spirit?

Arjuna had ordered Krishna to drive him into the space between the two armies, that he might survey the field, and there, as he looked for the last time upon all that was splendid and brilliant and still unflawed in the hosts of the enemy, these thoughts of despair came upon him with a rush; his

great bow Gandiva dropped from his hand; and he sank down spiritless on the floor of his chariot.

Then came an instant which stands alone in history. It lasted only a few minutes. Two armies faced each other, in the second between the sounding of the trumpets and the shooting of the first arrows; but in that one moment of expectancy the Lord Krishna revealed Himself to the soul of His worshipper, in such a way that he saw his duty clearly; all hesitation dropped away from him, and springing to his feet fearlessly he sounded the war-cry of the Pandavas, and flung himself upon the fortunes of battle. For to see God is the only thing that can make a man strong to face the world and do his duty.

Even as of old, when the Babe Krishna had opened His little mouth to cry, and His grieved foster-mother, bending over Him, had seen the great vision of the Universe within His lips, so now again, on the field of battle, He showed to Arjuna His Universal Form.

First in a kind of swift mystic chant came the words, "I am the soul, O Arjuna, seated in the heart of every being. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. Vishnu amongst the gods am I, amongst lights I am the Sun. I am the mind amongst the senses, the moon amongst the stars. Amongst the waters, I am Ocean himself. Amongst trees the Ashwattha\* tree am I; amongst weapons the thunderbolt; and Time amongst events. Of rivers I am the Ganges. Of created things I am the beginning, middle, and end. Time Eternal am I, and the Ordainer with face turned on every side! I am Death that seizeth all, and the source of all that is to be. I am the splendour of those that are splendid. I am Victory, I am Exertion, I am the goodness of the good. I am the Rod of those that chastise, and the Policy of them who seek victory. I am Silence amongst things that are secret, and the Knowledge of those possessed of knowledge. That which is the seed of all things, I am that!

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\* A name for the Bo-tree, *Ficus religiosa*.



Supporting this entire Universe with a portion only of My strength, I stand!"

The wonderful voice died away and all the senses of Arjuna smitten as it were for a moment, lay stilled and trembling, realising that living or dead, all beings were equally one in God, and realising too that even what seemed his own acts were not his own, but the Lord's, done through him. Then he suddenly rose to the height of a great rapture. Before him appeared as heretofore the countless hosts of the Kurus and Pandavas, but he saw all now as a part of Krishna Himself. Each arm, each hand, each weapon, was as an arm, a hand, a weapon of the Divine Charioteer. Multitudinous were the faces and forms that appeared now as His. Fierce and terrible, like the fire that ends the worlds, was the shining energy of His glory. And like moths rushing upon a flame for their own destruction, all living things appeared to be rushing toward Him to be devoured.

But as the mortal gazed upon the great vision, the terror of the sight overwhelmed him. He could bear no more. And he shrank back, crying, "O Thou that art Lord of all the gods, Thou that art the refuge of the Universe, be gracious unto me! Have mercy! Show me once more, I pray, Thy common form!" At these words, like a dream, the mighty splendour passed; and Arjuna, strong and alert, with mind braced, and muscles and nerves made firm as steel, found himself once more with his Charioteer, about to engage in the awful battle of Kurukshetra. But what he had understood in those few seconds, it took all his after-life to express. Nay, when it came to be written down, it took many words. And what was taught in a single flash of insight and knowledge has stood since, through all the ages, as one of the world's Scriptures, under the name of "Bhagavad Gita, the Song of the Blessed One."

## THE LAMENT OF GANDHARI

The sun itself was pale that rose over the battlefield of Kurukshetra, when the combat was ended. The eighteenth day had seen the slaying of Duryodhana, and the last night of all had witnessed a massacre in the sleeping camp of the Pandavas, wherein children, grandchildren, friends, and confederates of the victors had all alike been put to the sword. To add to the horror of this carnage, it was known that many of the destined victims, wakened from sleep by cries and sounds of struggle coming out of the darkness and believing that an army had taken them by surprise, had struggled to their feet and slain each other. Morning dawned on scenes of desolation and despair. True, the Pandava heroes and Krishna stood uninjured and victorious, but about them lay the death of all their hopes. Theirs was henceforth the empire, but without any heir to whom it could be left. The throne was secured to them, but their homes were empty.

Around them on every hand lay the flower of the Indian knighthood, silent for ever. Those who had marched to battle with colours flying, those whose chariots had been foremost, their steeds most spirited, and their trumpets loudest, those whose seats had been veritably on the back of the elephant, lay now on the cold earth, at the mercy of kites and jackals, of vultures and wolves. Even amongst the mighty hosts of Duryodhana, their foe, three officers alone were left alive.

In the distance was seen the woe-stricken procession of the royal women of the Kurus, coming to mourn their dead. And the Pandavas trembled as they gazed at them, for those whose reserve had been hitherto so impenetrable that the gods themselves might scarcely look on them, walked now, absorbed in their great grief, in utter indifference of the

public eye. The hundred sons of Dhritarashtra all lay dead upon that field.

Somewhat withdrawn from the rest, and made venerable, not only by their rank, but also by their manifold bereavements, their great age, and their blindness, Gandhari the Queen and Dhritarashtra the King were seated in their car of state. They were the heads of the defeated house, and heads even, by blood kindred, of the family of the victors. For them, by reason of the respect due to them, the meeting with the Pandavas must necessarily seem more like the submission of Yudhishtira than his triumph. To them, therefore, came the young King—Dharma-Raja, King of Righteousness, as his people called him henceforth—with his four brothers, and Draupadi, and Krishna, and, touching their feet, stood before them in deep silence.

Right queenly was the aged Gandhari in her sorrow. Dhritarashtra her husband had been born blind; but she, out of wifely devotion, of her own accord had darkened her eyes with a bandage, and worn it faithfully all the years of their union. And by this had come to her deep spiritual insight. Her voice was as the voice of fate. That which she had said would happen, could not fail to come to pass. Day after day of the battle, when Duryodhana had come to her in the morning, asking for her blessing that he might return triumphant from that day's fighting, she had said only, "Victory, my son, will follow the Right!" From the beginning she had known that Kurukshetra would see the end of all her house. Even now, such was the sternness of her self-control, her heart was weeping rather for her husband, in his sorrow and desolation, than for her own loss of "a century of sons". And this was the more true, since she knew well that had it not been for Dhritarashtra's own weakness and desire, the disaster of this day need never have been theirs. Her own inflexible will had never wavered. Never for one moment had she cast longing glances towards empire, preferring it in her secret heart to righteousness. But this very fact, that her husband was being crushed,

under the doom he had himself brought down upon himself, was calling out her deepest tenderness in this sad hour. Proud and stern to the whole world beside, to him Gandhari was all a wife, gentle and loving and timid in sight of his pain. She knew well that from her in these terrible moments might go out the force that destroys and lest she should bring harm thereby upon Yudhishtira as he approached to make salutation she restrained her powers forcibly and bent her eyes downward within their enfolding bands, upon his foot; and immediately, it is said, at that point where she was looking, a burn appeared, so terrible was her gaze.

But when she had spoken kindly with Draupadi and the Queen-mother of the Pandavas, Gandhari turned away from all others and addressed herself to Krishna. With Him alone there was no need of self-control. With Him she might even let the battlefield, with all its fearful details, rise point by point before the eyes of her mind. Hand in hand, as it were, with the Lord, she might gaze on all, think of all, and tell out her whole heart.

“Behold, O Lotus-Eyed,” she cried, “these daughters of my house! Widowed of their lords, with locks unbound, hear Thou their cries of woe! Brooding over their dead bodies, they call to mind the faces of the great Bharata chiefs! Behold them seeking out their husbands, their sires, their sons and brothers! The whole field is covered with these childless mothers, and widowed wives, of heroes. Here lie the bodies of great warriors, who in their lifetime were like to blazing fires. Here are scattered their costly gems and golden armour, their ornaments and garlands. The weapons hurled by heroic hands, spiked clubs and swords, and darts of many forms, lie in confusion here, never again to speed forth on dread errands of slaughter. And beasts of prey roam hither and thither at their will, amongst the dead. How terrible, O Krishna, is this battlefield! Beholding these things, O powerful One, I am on fire with grief!

“How empty is now become the Universe! Surely, in this dread contest of Kurus and Pandavas, the elements them-



selves have been destroyed! Desolate, like ashes of dead fires, lie now those heroes who took the part of Duryodhana in this fray. On the bare earth sleep they who knew all softness. Hymned by the cries of jackals are they whose glory was chanted by the bards. Embracing their weapons, they lie low amidst the dust of battle. And the wailing of women mingles with the roar of hungry beasts, singing them to their rest. What was that destiny, O Krishna, that has pursued us? Whence came this curse that has fallen upon us?" Weeping and lamenting in this fashion, the Kuru Queen suddenly became aware that the dead body of her son Duryodhana lay before her. This sight was too much for the doom-smitten woman, and all her grief burst forth afresh. She remembered her own terrible blessing, "Victory, O my son, will follow the Right!" pronounced every morning over the head of the kneeling prince. She saw now realised that same vision that had been present with her daily, since the battle began. All these days she had been treading a path of anguish under the shadow of the coming woe. She had become as it were the companion of judgement and sorrow, and there was no room for appeal. A great queen was Gandhari, wife of Dhritarashtra, sovereign of the Kuru clans, yet she was woman and mother also, and her mourning that was half wail, half prayer, rose suddenly to a new note.

"Behold, O Krishna!" she said. "Behold my son, wont in battle to be irresistible, sleeping here on the bed of heroes! Terrible are the changes wrought by Time! This terror of his foes, who of old walked foremost amongst crowned persons, lies now before us in the dust. He for whose pleasure the fairest of women would vie with one another, has none now to bear him company save hungry jackals. He who was proudly encircled by kings, lies slain now, and encircled by the vultures.

"Fanned now is he by noisome birds of prey, with the flapping of their wings. Prince as he was and soldier, my son lies slain by Bhima, even as the elephant may be slain by the lion. Behold Thou him, O Krishna, lying on the bare

ground yonder, stained with his own gore, slain in battle by the club of Bhima! Not long since, beheld I the earth, full of elephants and cattle and horses ruled by Duryodhana without a rival. Today do I behold her destitute of creatures, and ruled by another.

“Ah, why breaketh not my heart into a hundred fragments, at the sight of these my beloved slain in battle? What sin have I and these other weeping daughters of men, committed, that Time should have brought upon us this disaster?”

Passing then from the contemplation of Duryodhana and the sons of her own household, the mourning chant of the Queen proceeded. Dwelling upon each hero in turn, Gandhari passed the whole history of the battle in review. Again and again, her mind took note of the impossibility of having stayed the great catastrophe at any point. Again and again she dwelt on the inevitableness of fate. Every now and then would her sobs break out afresh, “How early, O Blessed One, how early, have all these my sons been utterly consumed!”

The voice of Gandhari failed and broke, and she ceased for a moment from the wildness of her sorrow. In that moment, all that had happened passed swiftly before her mind. Like one who had risen a step on a mountain side, she saw suddenly also the Pandava bereavement. The battle appeared before her as a play, in which two armies had destroyed each other. Who had been the mover of all these puppets? Who, that could have prevented, had allowed such evil to befall? With one swift glance, Gandhari saw the truth, and, in the thunder-like tones of the prophet, gazing at a vision of far-off doom, with the voice of the judge instead of that of the mourner, she turned slowly round and addressed herself once more to the Lord of All.

“Two armies, O Krishna, have been here consumed. Whilst they thus put an end to each other, why were Thine eyes closed? Thou who couldst have done either well or ill, as pleased Thee, why hast Thou allowed this evil to come upon

all? Mine is it then, Thou Wielder of discus and mace, in virtue of the truth and purity of womanhood, to pronounce Thy doom! Thou, O Govinda, because Thou wast indifferent to the Kurus and Pandavas, whilst they killed each other, shalt Thyself become the slayer of Thine own kinsmen. In the thirty-sixth year from now, O slayer of Kamsa, having brought about the destruction of Thy sons and kindred, Thou shalt Thyself perish by woeful means, alone in the wilderness. And the women of Thy race, deprived of sons, kindred and friends, shall weep and wail in their desolation, as do now these of the race of Bharata!"

And lo, as Gandhari ended, the Lord looked upon her and smiled! "Blessed be thou, O Gandhari," said He, "in thus aiding Me in the ending of My task. Verily are My people, the Vrishnis, incapable of defeat, therefore must they needs die by the hands of one another. Behold, O mother, I accept thy curse." And all who listened to these words were filled with wonder and fear.

Then the Holy Knight bent down to the aged Queen. "Arise, arise, O Gandhari," He said, "and set not thy heart on grief! By indulging in sorrow man increaseth it twofold. Bethink thee, O daughter, that the Brahmin woman bears children for the practice of austerities? The cow bringeth forth offspring for the bearing of burdens. The labouring woman addeth by child-bearing to the ranks of the workers. But those of royal blood are destined from their birth to die in battle!"

The Queen listened in silence to the words of Krishna. Only too well did she know their truth. Desolation was spread around and within. Nothing appeared before her save the life of austerity, to be spent in the forest. With vision purified by great events, she looked out upon the world, and found it all unreal. There was nothing further to be said, and she remained silent. Then she and Dhritarashtra, together with Yudhishtira and the other heroes, restraining that grief which rises from folly, proceeded together to perform the last rites for the dead by the Ganges side.

## THE DOOM OF THE VRISHNIS

MANY years had gone by, and men had almost forgotten the great warfare of their youth, on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra. Under the long reign of Yudhishthira, the land had reposed; growing daily in prosperity. And the different peoples, living in different parts of India, looked up to their suzerain and were content. Amongst others none had waxed richer or more powerful than those clans who owned the sway of Ugrasena, King of Mathura, and his powerful Minister Krishna. Their country, from the city of Mathura on the Jamuna, to Dwaraka—that Krishna had built—on the seacoast, was filled with abundance of good things. As soldiers and knights the people had come to enjoy life daily more and more. Their cities were beautiful, their mode of living was splendid, they possessed great treasures, and they themselves were fine and strong, and full of health, and love of manly pleasures.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this prosperity, strange rumours began to be whispered about amongst them. Certain great lords of the court were said to have angered three divine sages who had come to visit their city by playing on them a practical joke, and these beings of miraculous power had, in their wrath, it was said, called down a curse upon the race, that its members should one day be seized with a madness from the gods, and exterminate each other. A terror without a name was felt amongst the people. At the very moment when their pride was at its height, it seemed as if coming disaster had thrown its shadow over them.

The matter was carried to the ears of Ugrasena the King. Krishna was consulted; but in Him there could be no fear; for He regarded the world as a drama watched by the soul; and as one would not cry out, in fear of the catastrophe seen in a play, even so He, the Lord, could feel no dread



of the course of events. He smiled gently, therefore, on the perplexity of the King and his subjects. "That which is to be will surely happen," He said quietly, and left the Council. But Ugrasena could not regard thus calmly the possible calamity. He knew well that if only the Vrishnis maintained self-control they had no enemies who need be feared. Now he regarded wine and intoxicating liquors of all kinds as open doors to the madness of a gathering. Had it not been said that the knights would be seized with some strange illusion, that, intoxicated with pride, they would slay each other? He therefore sternly forbade that such drinks should be made or sold within his dominions, on pain of death; and his subjects also understanding the great wisdom of this command, bound themselves over to refrain from their use or manufacture.

But while the citizens of Dwaraka were thus striving to avert the impending calamity, Death, the embodied form of Time, wandered daily to and fro amongst their dwellings. Like unto a man of fierce and terrible look, bald-headed, and dark of colour he was. Sometimes he was seen by the Vrishnis as he peered into their houses. Their greatest archers took aim again and again at him. but none of their shafts succeeded in piercing him, for he was none other than the Destroyer of all beings himself. Day after day strong winds blew, and many were the evil omens that were seen, awful, and foreboding the destruction of the royal clans. The streets swarmed with rats. Earthen pots showed cracks, or broke, from no apparent cause. Mice in the night would eat away the hair and nails of slumbering men. The chirping of the mocking-bird was constantly heard within the house. Cranes were known to hoot like owls, and goats to imitate the cries of jackals. Pigeons, messengers of coming ruin, were seen to enter and fly about the houses of the Vrishnis. Animals went astray in their kinds. Asses were born of kine and elephants of mules; kittens were fathered by dogs, and mice by the mongoose. Fires, when first lighted, bent their flames toward the left. Sometimes they threw out a blaze whose

splendour burnt blue and red. The sun, at his rising and setting over the doomed city, seemed to be encircled with headless bodies of men. Those who kept silence, for prayer or thought, immediately became aware of the heavy tread about them, of marching hosts, yet never could they find out what had caused the sound. The constellations were again and again seen to be struck by the planets. The wives of Vrishni hereof dreamt nightly of a witch who came and snatched from their wrists the auspicious thread. And the guards of the royal armoury suddenly discovered that the place where the weapons and standards of State should be were empty.

Then the Vrishnis, in their fear of what seemed to be coming upon them, felt the need of some opportunity for public prayer and penance for the averting of evil destiny. But Krishna, pondering alone upon all these portents, understood that the thirty-sixth year was come, and that the words of Gandhari, burning with grief at the death of her sons, and deprived as she had been of all her kinsmen, were about to be fulfilled. And seeing all things, and understanding that what was to be would surely come to pass, He did not attempt to turn aside the course of destiny, but rather set Himself calmly and cheerfully to make the path of events easy. He sent heralds therefore throughout the city, to command the Vrishnis to make a pilgrimage to the seacoast, there to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ocean.

The command agreed well with the feeling of the nobles themselves that they would do wisely, as a people, to appoint an occasion of public devotion and sacrifice, by which to avert the divine anger threatening them. Preparations were immediately begun, therefore, for the journey of the great knights, and all their households and retainers, to the sea-side. This could not be done without laying in large supplies of all kinds of provisions. And now also came the opportunity to break the command of Ugrasena and the self-restraining ordinance of the whole city. Great stores of wines and spirits were made ready along with all kinds of costly

meats and other viands, and the vast procession, with its carriages and elephants and horses and its contingents of servants journeying on foot, was organised for the march. Little did these turbulent warriors, heads of powerful houses, and skilled in the wielding of sword and bow, suspect that their time was come! Only the Lord Krishna, of infinite energy, knew the character of the hour and stood unmoved.

The coast was reached, the place of encampment chosen, and tents were pitched. But then, instead of worship and fasting, the Vrishnis, impelled by the blindness of fate, entered upon high revels. Wine flowed at every banquet. The field echoed and re-echoed with the blare of trumpets. On every hand were actors and dancers plying their vocations. Plays, tournaments, and feasts followed each other in rapid succession.

A spark will cause a conflagration when the forest is dry. Perhaps it began with a word said in drunken jest. Perhaps it was some indiscreet reminiscence, called up by confused brains. In any case, a terrible quarrel broke out suddenly amongst these banqueters. Anger led to fierce recrimination, and the challenge was followed on every side by blows. In a few brief moments the scene of pleasure had become a field of slaughter. Those of the same blood stood ranged against one another. Son killed sire, in that awful day, and sire killed son. And men whisper to this day of a terrible thunderbolt of iron, seeming as if it were hurled by invisible hands, that worked havoc of death on that dread field. The Vrishnis, having reached the day of their doom, rushed upon death, even as insects rush into the flame. No one amongst them thought of flight. And the Wielder of discus and mace stood calmly in their midst, holding raised in His hand an iron thunderbolt, which He had formed out of a blade of grass.

The sound of the strife died away in silence for all the clansmen—save one who was sent to call Arjuna from Hastinapura—had been destroyed. Krishna, then, leaving the camp in charge of servants and men-at-arms, and know-

ing well that the time for His own death had come, returned hastily to the city and called upon His father to assume the direction of affairs, holding the women of the Vrishnis under his protection till the arrival of Arjuna at Dwaraka. For Himself, He said, having witnessed again a scene as terrible as the slaughter of the Kurus, and being robbed of His kinsmen, the world had become intolerable to Him, and He should retire to the forest for the life of renunciation. Having so spoken, Krishna touched with His head the feet of Vasudeva, and turned quickly to leave his presence. As he did so, however, a loud wail of sorrow broke from the women and children of His house. Hearing this, the merciful Lord retraced His steps, and, smiling upon them all for the last time, said gently, "Arjuna will come and will be your protector. And all your need shall be met by him." Then He departed from the palace, and made His way to the forest, not to return.

Never again was the Lord Krishna seen in the world He had left behind. Reaching the lowest depths of those wild places, He established Himself there in meditation. Deeply pondered He on all that had passed, grasping in His mind the curse of Gandhari, and the nature of Time and Death. Then did He set Himself towards the restraint of all His senses. Seated firmly beneath a tree, He steadied His own mind upon itself, and drew in all His perceptions, one after another. At last He became all stillness and all silence, reaching the uttermost rest. . . . Then, it is said, that all might be fulfilled, wrapped thus in self-communion as in an impenetrable mantle, Krishna laid Himself down upon the bare earth. Nothing in His whole body was vulnerable save the soles of His feet. And as He lay thus, a fierce huntsman came that way, and mistaking the feet of the Lord for a crouching deer, aimed at them an arrow, which struck Him in the heel.

Coming quickly up to his prey, the huntsman, to his dismay, beheld One dressed in the yellow cloth, and wrapped in meditation; and he knew Him moreover to be divine, for



behind Him he beheld the shining-forth of innumerable arms. Filled with remorse, not untouched with fear, that huntsman fell to the earth and touched the feet of Krishna. And He, the blessed Lord, smiled upon His slayer, and blessed and comforted him. Then, with these words of compassion upon His lips, He ascended upwards, filling the whole sky with His splendour. Reaching the threshold of the divine region, all the gods and their attendants advanced to meet Him, but He, filling all Heaven with His glory, passed through their midst and ascended up into His own inconceivable region. Then did the abodes of blessedness resound with His praises. All the divinities, and the sages, and the celestial hosts, bending before Him in humility, worshipped Him. The gods made salutation, and exalted souls offered worship, to Him Who was Lord of All. Angelic beings attended on Him, singing His praises. And Indra also, the King of Heaven, hymned Him right joyfully.

## TALES OF THE DEVOTEES

### THE LORD KRISHNA AND THE BROKEN POT

Now, the Lord Krishna was bidden by a certain rich man to a feast. And they set before Him many dishes. But His eye took note of cup that by chance was blemished, and first this imperfect one He drew to Himself, and out of it began to eat. Which when that rich man saw, he fell at His feet and said, "O Lord, dealest Thou even thus with men? Choorest Thou always the broken vessel first?"

## THE LORD KRISHNA AND THE LAPWING'S NEST

It was the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The white conch-shells were about to sound, the elephants to march forward, and the attack of the archers to commence. The moment was brief and terrible. Banners were flying, and the charioteers preparing for the advance. Suddenly a little lapwing, who had built her nest in the turf of a hillock in the midst of the battlefield, drew the attention of the Lord Krishna by her cries of anxiety and distress for her young. "Poor little mother!" He said tenderly "let this be thy protection!" and, lifting a great elephant-bell that had fallen near, He placed it over the lapwing's nest. And so, through the eighteen days of raging battle that followed, a lapwing and her nestlings were kept in safety in their nest, by the mercy of the Lord, even in the midst of the raging field of Kurukshetra.

## THE STORY OF PRAHLADA

THERE is a strange old Hindu notion, according to which a very young child is said to be like a fish. Then comes a time when all the baby's eagerness is for food, and his little arms and legs and head are like so many small appendages almost always kicking. This stage of development suggests the tortoise. Next the baby creeps on all-fours. How like a boar! Then it begins to leap upwards and fall down—half-man, half-lion. After this it becomes a dwarf or little man. At last comes the age of the heroes, Rama and Krishna, who make it possible to be a Buddha. Altogether, Hindus count ten of these degrees, or steps, and call them the ten Incarnations of the God Vishnu. Gradually each stage has come to have its own wonder-tale attached to it, and perhaps the story of Prahlada is simply the legend that grew up about the idea of a Man-lion.

Hiranyakashipu was the king of the Daityas, or demons. Now these demons are the cousins of the Devas or gods, and the two parties are always at war with each other. The gods rule the three worlds—their own, the upper; the middle, where men dwell; and the nether, or abode of the demons. But occasionally the demons gain control, seizing the thrones of the gods and usurping their power. Then the gods have to go to Vishnu, the Preserver, and pray to Him to help them out of the difficulty; and sometimes He does it in a very curious way.

In such an epoch, Hiranyakashipu lived and was king. He defeated all the gods, and seated himself on the throne of the three worlds, declaring that nowhere in the universe was there any god but himself, and that both demons and men must worship him alone. Then, in fear of a coming catastrophe, the gods themselves began to walk the earth in the form of men; and, doubtless, they appealed also to the Lord Vishnu, imploring His aid. In any case, soon after



the King's victory, a little son was born to him, in the city of Multan in the Punjab, and he named him Prahlada.

Curiously enough, with such a father, the little Prahlada proved a very religious child. He seemed to have inborn ideas about worship and about the gods. And his father, who had determined to drive the thought of the deities out of the world, was very much troubled about him. At last he made up his mind to put him into the hands of a very stern teacher with strict orders that he was never to be allowed to worship any one but his own father. The teacher, to have him better under his control, took the prince to his own home. It was all to no purpose. When they taught him his alphabet, showing him the letter K, "Yes that is for Krishna," the child would reply, and learn it eagerly. G—"For Gopala," said Prahlada, and everything that they could teach him, he applied at once in this way. Not only did he himself talk of nothing but Krishna; he spent much of his time also in teaching his worship to the boys around him. This was too much. After struggling in vain to reform his pupil, the distressed schoolmaster felt that he must appeal to Hiranyakashipu, or the mischief would soon spread too far to be set right. The King's anger was great, and he sent for his son. "I hear that you have been worshipping Krishna!" he thundered, when the little boy, who had been brought away from his books, stood before the throne. "Yes, father!" said Prahlada bravely, "I have." "Are you going to promise me that you will never do it again?" asked the King, and he looked very terrible, while the royal jewel in his turban shook with rage.

"No, father, I cannot promise," said poor little Prahlada.

"You cannot promise!" shouted his father, in amazement at his daring. "But I can have you killed!"

"Not unless it is the will of Krishna!" said the child firmly.

"We'll see about that," said Hiranyakashipu. And he ordered his guards to take Prahlada and throw him, though

he was his own son, down to the bottom of the ocean, and there pile up rocks on top of him.

He hoped up to the last minute that the little one would be frightened, and run back to give the promise he required. But Prahlada did not come.

The fact was, he was worshipping Krishna in his own heart with such a feeling of love and happiness, that he had scarcely heard his father's words and did not even notice when they put him on a stone slab, and piled huge blocks up on top of him, and threw the whole great mass out into the ocean.

He never noticed! He had forgotten all about himself. That was the secret of it. But no rocks could keep down one who forgot himself like this. So everything fell aside, and he rose again to the surface of the water. Then Prahlada remembered, and at once he found himself kneeling on the shore, face to face with the Lord Krishna Himself. The Lotus-Eyed smiled gently. Light seemed to be streaming out round Him in all directions. And He put His hand on Prahlada's head to bless him, saying "My child, ask of Me what thou wilt!"

"O Lord!" said Prahlada, "I don't want long life, or riches, or anything like that! But do give me a love of God that shall never change in my heart, however much other things may come and go around me; that in the midst of this changeful world I may cherish unchanging love, for Thee, O Thou Unchangeable! This alone is my whole wish!"

"Prahlada," said the Lord Krishna solemnly, "you shall be always My soldier and My lover,"

Then everything that was beautiful disappeared, for the King's guards had found Prahlada again, and were carrying him once more into his father's presence.

"Who brought you out of the sea?" said the King, scarcely believing his own eyes.

"Krishna," said the child.

"What name dared you to utter?" said his father, growing purple with fury.

"Krishna's" replied Prahlada.

"Where is this Krishna of yours?" asked Hiranyakashipu.

Prahlada's eyes opened wide in wonder. "Why," he said, "He is everywhere!"

"Even in this pillar?" said the King mockingly.

"Yes even in that pillar!" answered his little son.

The King uttered a loud jarring laugh. "Let Him appear to *me*, then," he cried, "in whatever form and deed best please Him!"

Terrible words! and wonderful prayer of Hiranyakashipu! Great beyond that of common men must have been his power, for at this demand, ringing out into the ears of the Lord Himself, the pillar cracked from side to side, and out sprang One, half like a man and half like a lion, who leapt upon him and tore him into pieces!

So the demons were driven out, and the Devas took their own places once more. But some say that the soul of Hiranyakashipu was glad of this release. And these hold that he was the same who in some later birth became Ravana, King of Lanka, and who yet again came into the world as Shishupala.

For once upon a time, long before, they say, a great sainted soul had been driven back to birth by some evil fate. But a choice had been offered him. He might pass out of this bondage, it was said, after seven births as the friend of God, or three as His enemy. Without a moment's doubt he chose three births as the enemy, that he might the sooner return to God. Wherefore he became Hiranyakashipu and Ravana, and yet again that Shishupala, whose story is still to tell.

## THE STORY OF DHRUVA A MYTH OF THE POLE STAR

THE poetry of the world is full of the similes devised by poets to suggest the midnight sky. The great multitude of the stars shining and quivering, as it were, against the darkness, have been likened to many things—to a swarm of golden bees, to golden apples on a tree, to a golden snow-storm in the sky, to fire-flies at evening, holes in a tent-roof, distant lamps moving in the darkness, jewels on a blue banner, and so on, and so forth. But only in India, so far as I know, have they ever been compared to white ants, building up a vast blue ant-hill!

For the fact that seems most deeply to have impressed the Hindu mind, was not the appearance of the starry dome, so much as the perfect steadiness in it, of the Polar Star. Wonderful star! the only point in all the heavens that stayed unmoved, while round it came and went the busy worlds. And this stillness moreover must have characterised it from the very beginning of things. It was never for the Pole Star to learn its quietude. It came by no degrees to its proper place. Rather has it been faithful and at rest since the very birth of time. Surely in all the world of men there could be nothing like this, unswerving, unerring from beginning to end, the witness of movement, itself immutable. Unless indeed we might imagine that some child in his heart had found the Goal, and remained thenceforth, silent, absorbed and stirless, from eternity to eternity, through all the ages of man.

In India, the mystic land of the lotus, was born the child Dhruva. His father was a king, and his mother, Suniti, the chief of all the queens. Yet even on a lot so fortunate as this, may fall the dark shadow of disaster. For long before the birth of Dhruva, the son of one of the younger queens had been promised the throne, and the coming of the new child



would undo this claim, since the son of the principal queen was undoubtedly the King's true heir. It is easy, therefore, to understand the anger and fear of the lesser wife at the child's birth. She was jealous of the new baby, on behalf of her own son, and did not fail to show her feeling in many ways; till at last the King, in very anxiety for their safety, ordered his wife and little one to be exiled from the court, and sent them to live in a simple cottage, on the distant edge of a great forest.

It was a humble cottage enough, yet charming in its own way. It was built of grey mud, and thatched with brown palm-leaves. In front, there was a deep verandah covered by the wide eaves; and here even a queen could rest, and receive her village-friends, without a screen, for facing it, instead of the city, was the impenetrable forest, whence at nightfall could be heard the roaring of wild beasts.

More and more, as time went on, did the occasional visits of holy men, on their way through the forest to distant shrines, become the great events of their woodside life. For the hush of the green woods brought with it healing, and the thought of God. And a great peace entered gradually into the heart of Suniti, the Queen. Thus, under her calm influence, the child Dhruva would linger, towards sunset, near the lotus-ponds, dreaming of the beauty of the great flowers that rocked to and fro with every movement of the waters, yielding but untouched. They came by degrees to mean for him all holiness, all tenderness, all purity, these large pink and white lotuses, lying against their wide green leaves, as if the gods had passed that way across the waters, and left them blossoming in their foot-steps. Or he would lie awake at night, and listen to the sobbing of the palm-leaves, rustling and swaying in the darkness, far above him, wondering, wondering, what was the story they were telling. Or he would stand quietly, watching the peasants in the rice-fields that stretched to the horizon behind them, sowing the seed, and, when the rains lay deep on the earth, transplanting the crops.

So the years passed, and the brooding silence of nature was all about them. Only in the sad heart of Suniti, all the joy of life was centred in her son.

At last, when Dhruva was seven years old, he began to ask about his father. - "Could I not go to see him, Mataji, honoured mother?" he said one day.

"Why, yes, my child!" said the poor Queen, full of startled pleasure at the thought, yet so accustomed to sorrow, that she trembled at any change in the even tenor of their life, lest it should end by robbing her of the one thing that was still hers. "Oh yes, thou shalt go, little one, tomorrow!"

And so, the next day, Dhruva set out, in the care of a guard, to seek his father, and tell him that he was his son. Beautiful was the road by which they went. High over their heads spread the boughs of the shady trees, and on each side lay the wide fields. Every now and then they would pass a great pond, with its handsome bathing-steps on one side, crowned by an arch, and near by would see the children of the village playing. For each village had its own bathing-pond and its own temple. And in the streets, as they passed through them, it being still early in the morning, they would see the jeweller working over his little stove, the potter turning his wheel, and the cowherds taking the cows to pasture in the distant meadows. Sometimes the child walked, and sometimes he was carried. At last they arrived at the royal gates, and Dhruva went in, past the sentinels, and entered the palace itself. On and on he went, till he reached the hall of audience, then he came to the steps of the throne, and there, at last, he saw the King himself. At this point, he ran to his father's arms.

The King was overcome with joy. Not one day had gone by, of all those seven years, without his longing for his wife and son, and here was suddenly the little one himself, come of his own accord, full of love and trust. He felt as if he could never caress him enough, or distinguish him enough, to make up for those long years of neglect.

At this very moment, however, Dhruva's step-mother

entered the hall. If only this lady had been the Queen, her son would have had the right to be King some day, and she would not have needed to claim the succession for him. But as it was, she could never forget that her rival Suniti was the real Queen, and that Dhruva, therefore, was the rightful heir. And her whole heart was full of jealousy. Now, therefore, her anger knew no bounds. She taunted her husband with the memory of his early promise, and spoke words so wicked about the child on his knee, that in haste he put him down, and turned to plead with her, as if afraid that her evil prayers might come to pass.

But even a child knows that a strong man or woman is the greatest thing in the whole world, and when his father put him away, Dhruva felt as if his heart had broken within him, at finding him weak. Silently, all unnoticed, he touched his feet, and kissed the steps of the throne before him. Then he turned, beckoned to his guard, and went.

It seemed a long way home. But at last they reached the door-way, where the Queen had watched hour after hour, not able to rest, in her terrible fear that something might have happened to her boy. The servant disappeared, and the child lifted the long lath-curtain, and bounded into her presence. Ah, how glad she was to see him! Here, at least, he was at home.

Then they went out into the verandah together, and Dhruva began to eat the fruits and cakes that were laid in readiness. While he ate, his graceful young mother watched him anxiously. Yes, it was as she had feared it might be. There was a difference. Something sad had come into the little face, as if in that one short day it had grown much older. And Suniti sighed, for she knew that all the happy years of his childhood were behind them. He would never be her baby any more.

But when he had finished his meal—for to speak while eating would have been grave disrespect!—Dhruva told her exactly what had happened, and the two sat sad and silent for a while. Then he asked a strange question:

"Mother! is there any one in the world who is stronger than my father?"

"Oh yes, my child!" she answered, thinking of the Lord Krishna, and half shocked at Dhruva's ignorance, "Oh yes, my child, the Lotus-Eyed!"

The solemn little face grew all eagerness. "And mother, where dwells He?" he asked. "Oh, far far away!" she answered vaguely, and then, seeing that she must give a reply, "Deep in the heart of the forest, where the tiger lives, and the bear, there dwells the Lotus-Eyed, my son!"

Dhruva said little more. A voice seemed to be sounding in his heart. It was so loud that sometimes he wondered if his mother did not hear it. From far far away in the depths of the forest it called, "Come to me! Come to me!" and he knew that it was the voice of the Lotus-Eyed, in Whom was all strength.

About midnight, he could bear it no longer. He rose up from his little bed, and stood over his sleeping mother for a moment. She did not wake. "O Lotus-Eyed, I leave my mother to Thee!" he said in his heart. Then he stole quietly out, and stood on the verandah, looking at the forest.

It was bright moonlight, and the trees cast long black shadows. He had never been allowed to go even a little way into the forest alone, and now he was going down to its very heart. But it must be right, for he could hear the voice calling, "Come to me!" louder than ever. "O Lotus-Eyed, I give myself to Thee!" he said, and stepped off the verandah, and over the grass into the forest.

He was barefooted, but the thorns were nothing. He had been weary, but that was all forgotten. On and on without resting, he went, seeking the Lotus-Eyed.

At last he reached the heart of the forest. Then came one with great fiery eyes, and hot breath, and swinging tail. Dhruva did not know who it was. He went up to him eagerly. "Are you the Lotus-Eyed?" he asked. And the tiger slunk away ashamed. Next came something with heavy footsteps and deep dark fur. "Are you the Lotus-Eyed?" asked



Dhruva. And the bear, too, slunk away ashamed. Still the child heard the voice of the Lotus-Eyed in his heart, saying, "Come! Come!" And he waited. All at once, out of the darkness of the forest there appeared before him a holy man, whose name was Narada, and he laid his hands on his head, saying "Little one, you seek the Lotus-Eyed! Let me teach you the way by which you shall find Him, and where!"

And then he showed him how to sit down on the earth, without moving, and to say over and over again, "Hail, Blessed One, Lord of the Worlds! Hail!" And he said that if his whole thought could fasten without wavering, in perfect steadiness, on the words he spoke, he would find the Lotus-Eyed, without a doubt.

The boy sank down on the ground, as he was told, and began to repeat the sacred text. Like a rock he sat there, moving not a muscle. Even when the white ants came to build their ant-hill, and raised it up around him, he never stirred. For deep in his own heart Dhruva had found the Lotus-Eyed, and he had come to rest for ever.

So the Pole Star was given him for his home, and is called to this day Dhruva-Loka.

But some say that away beyond it is another, larger and just as true, and that there Dhruva's mother, Suniti, was placed, that her child might be always at her feet, and joy be hers, throughout the countless ages of those stars.

## GOPALA AND THE COWHERD

FIRST I must tell you that Gopala had the best mother that ever lived. His father, too, had been a good man. He had not cared about money. All he had wanted was to be good, and read the holy books, learning all the beautiful things he could, and teaching them to other people. The village folk regarded him as their learned man, so they gave him a little field in which he could grow corn, and there was a patch of ground near his house which produced fruit and vegetables, and this had always been enough. When he lay dying, he said to his wife, "Beloved, I am not very anxious about you and Gopala. I know that our Lord Himself will take care of you. Besides, the field will bring you corn, and our kind neighbours will dig the garden for you, that you may have food." And the mother said, "Quite right, my husband. Have no care about us. We shall do well." Thus she cheered him, with all her strength, that he might die in peace, fixing all his thought on God.

And when all was over, the neighbours came and carried the dead body away. And they put it on a pile of wood, and set lighted straw to it, and it was burned until only a few ashes were left. Then they took the ashes and threw them into the river, and that was the end of Gopala's father.

So now the child and his mother lived all alone in the forest, and the only thing she was waiting for was the day when she also could die and rejoin her husband. But she wanted to be quite sure of being allowed to go to him. So she said many many prayers, and bathed three times every day, and tried to be hardworking and good. And the neighbours were indeed kind. Her corn was sown and harvested with that of the village, and they came and helped in the gardening, so that there was always food enough.

By-and-by, when Gopala was four or five years old, his mother felt that it was time he went to school. Only before

that could happen, he must have new clothes; and a little mat to carry under his arm, and unroll for a seat at school; and inside the mat, a number of palm-leaves for a copy-book, and a pen-box with an inkstand in it, and some reed pens. He would not need a slate just yet, for very little boys have sand strewn over the floor, and make their first letters and figures, with their fingers, in that. I wish you could have seen the new clothes he wanted! Poor little Gopala! India is such a hot country that two long pieces of cotton are all a little boy needs. One, called the Chaddar, is thrown over the left shoulder like a kind of shawl. And the other, the Dhoti, is folded round him below, and fastened in at the waist. I suppose he would want four of these, two for today, and two for tomorrow, when today's suit would be washed in the stream.

Of course all these things together cost very little, but to the poor mother it seemed a great deal, and she had to work hard for many days at her spinning-wheel, to earn the money.

At last all was ready, and, carefully choosing a lucky day, she blessed her little son, and stood at the cottage door, watching him go down the forest-path to his first lessons.

As for Gopala, he went on and on. The road seemed very long, and he was beginning to wonder if he had lost his way, when at last the village came in sight, and he could see numbers of other boys going in to school. Then he forgot that he had been a little frightened, and hurried up with the others and presented himself in class.

It was a long and delightful day. Even when lessons were over, there were games with the other boys, and when at last he set out to go home, it was almost dark. It was a long time before Gopala could forget that first walk home through the forest, alone. It grew darker and darker, and he could hear the roars of wild beasts. At last he was so frightened that he did not know what to do, and so began to run and never stopped till he was in his mother's arms.

Next morning he did not want to go to school. "But,"

said his mother, "you had such a happy day yesterday, my child, and learnt many beautiful things! You said you loved your lessons. Why do you not wish to go today?"

"School is all very well, mother," he replied, "but I am afraid to go alone through the forest."

And then he stood there, so ashamed! But how do you think his mother felt? Oh, such a terrible pain came into her heart, because she was too poor to send any one with him to school. It was only for a minute though, and then she remembered the Lord Krishna. She was one of those who worship Him as a young child, almost a baby, and she had called her own little one after Him, for the word Gopala means "Cowherd."

So she told her little boy a story. She said, "You know, my child, there lives in these woods another son of mine Who is also called Gopala. He herds cows in the forest yonder. He is always somewhere, near the path, and if you call out to him, 'Oh, Cowherd Brother, come with me to school!' He will come and take care of you, and then you will not be frightened, will you?"

And Gopala said, "Is it really true that my Brother will come and take care of me?"

And his mother said, "Yes, it is true—just as true as it is that you are God's child, and that He loves you."

"Good-bye, mother," said Gopala; "I love to go to school."

He set out bravely enough, but a little way down the forest path it was rather dark, and he began to feel afraid. He could hear his own heart go pit-a-pat. So he called out, "O Brother Cowherd, Brother Cowherd, come and play with me!"

The bushes first began to rustle, and then parted, and out peeped a boy's head, with a little gold crown on it, and a peacock's feather in the crown. Then a big boy jumped out and took the child's hand, and they played all the way to school.

But when they came near the village, the young Cowherd, telling His little brother to call Him again, on his way home,



went back to his cows. There was something so lovely about this boy, He was so full of fun, and yet so kind and gentle and strong, that Gopala grew to love Him as he had never loved any one before.

And as, day after day, he told his mother all about it, words could not express her gratitude. But she was not in the least surprised. It seemed to her quite natural that the Child Krishna should comfort a mother's heart.

So time went on. And then something happened. The schoolmaster announced that he must give a feast—a wedding-party, or something of the kind.

Now people in India practically never pay a school-master for keeping a school. It is quite easy for him, all the same, to obtain food. For his field, like the widow's, is part of the village lot, and the villagers plant and dig for him also.

But on a special occasion, such as the present, when it becomes known to his pupils that he must provide a feast, each boy will go home to his parents and say, "My noble teacher"—for so the master is called—"my noble teacher is about to give a party. What gifts can I take to him?"

Then some mothers will set to work and cook quantities of sweetmeats, cakes, and puddings; some will prepare great trays of fruit; one will buy beautiful silk cloth for him and his wife to wear at time of worship, and others will send cotton and muslin for daily clothing. In this way the school-master and his wife are amply provided for.

And now, like others of course, Gopala said to his mother that night, "Mother, tomorrow is our noble teacher's party. What can I take to him?"

Again her child's words made the poor mother very sad for a moment. She knew that she was not rich enough to give her little boy anything for his master. But it was only a moment, and she brightened up again, for she thought of the Child Krishna, and knew that He would help them.

"I cannot give you anything to take to your teacher, but ask your Brother in the forest for something as you go to school in the morning," she said.

So in the morning Gopala and the Shepherd Boy played all the way to school; but just as He was leaving, Gopala said to him, "O Brother, I almost forgot. Will you give me something for my teacher today? He is going to have a party."

"What can I give you? What am I but a poor Cowherd? Oh, but I know"—and away He ran for a moment, and came back with a little bowl of sour milk. In India they eat the thick part of sour milk, and call it curds. And He said, "That is all I can give you, Gopala. It is only a poor Cowherd's offering. But give it to your teacher."

Gopala thought it was a beautiful present, the more so because it came from his woodland friend. So he hastened to the master's house, and stood eagerly waiting behind a crowd of boys, all handing over what they had brought. Many and varied were the offerings, and none thought even of noticing the gift of the fatherless child.

This neglect was disheartening, and tears stood in the eyes of Gopala, when, by a sudden stroke of fortune, his teacher chanced to look at him. He took the tiny pot of curd from his hands, and went to empty it into a larger vessel, but, to his wonder, the pot filled up again. Again he poured, again the little pot was full. And so he went on, while it filled faster than he could empty it. Then the master gave them all curds to eat, and went on pouring and pouring. Still the little cup was full. Every one said, "What does this mean?" And Gopala, as much astonished as the rest, understood for the first time Who his Brother in the forest was. Never till this moment had he even guessed that the Child Krishna Himself had come to play with him. So when the master turned to him with the question, "Where did you get this curd?" it was very reverently that he answered, "I got it in the forest from my Brother, the Cowherd."

"Who is He?"

"One who comes and plays with me on my way to school," said Gopala. "He wears a crown on His head, with a peacock's feather in it, and carries a flute in His hand.

When I reach school He goes back and tends His cows, and when I am going home He comes again to play with me."

"Can you show me your Brother in the forest?"

"If you come, Sir, I can call."

So hand in hand the master and Gopala went along the path together. At the usual place the child called, "Cowherd Brother! Brother Cowherd! Won't you come?" But no voice answered. Gopala did not know what to do, and he saw a look of doubt on his teacher's face, so he cried once more. "O Brother Cowherd, if you do not come, they will think I do not tell the truth!"

Then came a voice, as if from far away within the forest, "Nay, little one, I cannot show My face. Thy master still has long to wait. Few sons indeed are blest with mothers like to thine!"

## A CYCLE OF GREAT KINGS

### THE STORY OF SHIBI RANA; OR THE EAGLE AND THE DOVE

There was a certain king whose name was Shibi Rana, and his power was so great, and grew so rapidly, that the gods in high heaven began to tremble, lest he should take their kingdoms away from them. Then they thought of a stratagem by which to test his self-control, and humble him by proving his weakness. For in the eyes of the gods only that man is invincible who is perfectly master of himself.

One day, as Shibi Rana sat on his throne in his pillared hall, with the open courtyard and its gardens and fountains stretching far before, there appeared high up in the air, flying straight towards him, a white dove, pursued by an eagle, who was evidently trying to kill it. Fast as the dove flew in its terror, the eagle flew faster. But just as it was on the point of being captured, the smaller bird reached the throne of Shibi Rana; the King opened his robe, and without a moment's hesitation it fluttered in, and nestled, panting and trembling, against his heart.

Then the eagle's flight came to a stop before the throne, and his whole form seemed so to blaze with anger, that every one trembled except the monarch, and no one felt the slightest surprise at hearing him speak.

"Surrender my prey!" he commanded in a loud voice, facing the King.

"Nay," said Shibi Rana quietly; "the dove has taken refuge with me, and I shall not betray its trust."

"This, then, is your vaunted mercy?" sneered the eagle. "The dove that you have sheltered was to have been my food. You show your power by protecting it, and you starve me. Is such your intention?"

"Not at all," said the King; "in fact, I will give you in its



place an equal quantity of any other food you choose."

"Of any other food?" said the eagle mockingly. "But suppose I asked for your own flesh?"

"My own flesh should be given," said Shibi Rana firmly.

A harsh laugh sounded through the hall, startling those who were standing about the throne; but when they looked again at the face of the bird, his eye was steady and piercing as before.

"Then I require," said he, speaking slowly and deliberately, "that this dove be weighed in the balance against an equal weight of the King's flesh."

"It shall be done," said Shibi Rana motioning for the scales.

"Stay!" said the eagle: "The flesh must be cut from the right side of the body only."

"That is easily granted," said the King with a smile.

"And your wife and son must be present at the sacrifice!"

"Bring the Queen and my son into our presence," said the King to an officer.

So the witnesses took their places, the balance was brought, and the dove was placed on one side, while the executioner prepared to carry out the horrible order. As he proceeded, however, it was found, to the dismay of the whole court, that with each addition of the King's flesh the dove grew heavier, and the weights of the two could not be made equal.

Then at last, from the left eye of Shibi Rana there fell a single tear.

"Stop!" thundered the eagle, "I want no unwilling sacrifice. Your tears destroy the value of your gift."

"Nay, my friend," said the King gently, turning on the eagle a face radiant with joy—"nay, my friend, you are mistaken; it is only that the left side weeps, because, on behalf of the weak and unprotected, it is given to the right of the King alone to suffer!"

At these words, startling all who heard them, the forms of the eagle and the dove were seen to have vanished, and

in their place stood Indra, the Chief of the Gods, and Agni, the God of Fire.

And the voice of Indra was hushed with reverence as he said, "Against greatness like that of Shibi Rana, the gods themselves shall struggle but in vain. Blessed be thou, O King, Protector of the Unprotected, who burnest with the joy of sacrifice! For to such souls must the very gods do homage, yielding to them a place above themselves."

## BHARATA

Once upon a time, in those bright ages when India was young, there lived a great king, Bharata, and so famous was he that even now the people speak of their country amongst themselves as Bharata Varsha, or Bharata's Land; and it is only foreigners who talk of it as "India."

In the days of this ruler, it was considered the right thing for every man, when he had finished educating his family—when his daughters were all married, his business affairs in order, and his sons well-established in life—to say farewell to the world and retire to the forest, there to give the remainder of his life to prayer and the thought of God. This was considered to be the duty of all, whatever their station in life, priest and merchant, king and labourer, all alike.

And so in the course of events the great King Bharata, type of the true Hindu sovereign, gave up his wealth and power and withdrew. His family and people woke up one morning, and he was gone. That was all. But everyone understood that it meant that he had passed out of the city during the night in the garb of a beggar, and the news spread through the country that his son was king. Just as the water of a lake closes over a stone thrown into it, and leaves no trace, so society went on its usual course, and the loss of Bharata made no mark.

And he made his way to the forests and plunged into meditation. He had had enough of riches and dignity. So they were easy to give up. He thought that he wanted nothing more that the world could give, save only peace.

But one day, as he sat under a great tree, repeating the name of God, a mother deer with her little one came down to the stream close by to drink. Just at that moment a lion roared in the forest, and the poor mother, startled, tried to jump the stream, carrying her fawn. But the shock had been too much for her. As she reached the opposite bank she

died, and her babe slipped back into the river, and was carried down by the current. Bharata, the hermit, saw the whole occurrence, and, full of mercy to all living things, broke through his devotions to run and save the fawn. He waded into the stream, and catching it in his arms, bore it into his hut and lighted a fire, by whose warmth he fondled it back to life. Alas, this beautiful deed became the saint's stumbling-block! For all his hope grew to be centred on this foster-child, and he who could give up crown and kingdom and money, like so much dross, forgot God for a baby deer! When night drew on and his whole mind should have been concentrated in meditation, he would be wondering why his little one had not come home, and agonising lest some tiger had eaten it.

So, when the time came for him to die, it was on the tearful eyes of the fawn that his eyes looked, and of his love for it that he thought last, instead of thinking of God.

Now we know that the last thought of the dying determines his next life. We begin again just where we left off. Naturally, therefore, in his next birth, Bharata himself became a deer.

But his prayers and devotion also could not fail to bear their fruit. So this deer remembered all that had happened to him in the past, though he had not the gift of speech. Therefore he wandered always near the hermitages, ate the remains of the offerings whenever he had a chance, and listened to the readings of the sacred texts. In this way he exhausted the results of his sin, and was born once more in a human body.

This time he was the son of a Brahmin, which was a great advantage. For the Brahmin caste is the highest and most religious amongst the Hindus. Hence in it the greatest amount of bathing is done; the greatest pains are taken that food shall be clean and simple, and of the proper kinds; and every man has a right to learn Sanskrit, and read the holy books.

But Bharata had forgotten nothing of his last two lives,



and this time he determined to finish the struggle, and rid himself of this bondage of birth. For we must always remember that in the Indian religion these bodies of ours are held to be prisons, where we are subject to many tortures, to pain and need, and separation from those we love. And the great object of the struggle of life is to be free, and reach the place where we may choose what we shall do, whether to come back into them or not. This was what Bharata wanted, so he made up his mind that in this birth he would be quite silent, and dwell upon God in his heart, thus avoiding all temptation to further sin. And this vow he kept. Only he spoke once, and this was how it happened :

He was supposed by his family to be dumb and an idiot. It did not occur to any one then that he ought to marry. So when his father died his brothers divided the property amongst themselves, and regarding him as good for nothing they divided his share also, and allowed him to make himself useful, and live upon their charity. During the day, the wives of his brothers would use him in lifting and carrying, and he would perform patiently whatever labour was imposed on him. Sometimes they would be angry, and then he would go out and sit under a tree, waiting till their anger had cooled. One day this had happened as usual, and Bharata had withdrawn, when a royal palankeen came in sight, borne by three coolies instead of four. Seeing this strong-looking fellow—whom they soon discovered to be dumb—seated by the road-side, the bearers insisted on putting down their burden till he had been forced to join them. Now the occupant of the palankeen was a king, who was proud of his learning, and he looked out and commanded the Brahmin to help in carrying him. Perhaps that one glance was enough to show Bharata that he had a message to that soul. He jumped up, took one pole of the chair, and began to walk. But he was curiously unsteady! Hop! jump! jolt! he went; jolt! jump! hop! It was terrible to be carried in this way. For Bharata was full of mercy to

every living thing, and he had to move aside for each ant and beetle and worm, lest his foot should kill it. At last the King put out his head. "Art thou too weary, O boor, to walk straight?" he said. "If so, put down thy burden and rest once more." His new servant looked at him, smiling, and spoke for the first time in his life, and his voice was as sweet as liquid honey, and his words were as the words of kings:

"Whom, O Friend, do you address as 'thou'? And whom do you call by the name of 'boor'? Is there anything in the whole world that is not yourself? And to that Self can there be either weariness or rest?" Such a light of greatness beamed about the man, that all who heard were overawed, and the King got out of the palanquin and prostrated himself, putting the dust of his feet on his own head.

"What, O Mighty One, art thou?" he said. And sitting down by the road-side, Bharata instructed him for many hours, till the desire for freedom was lighted also in the King's heart, and he never rested till he had given up his kingdom and become a wanderer. But the Brahmin went back to his own people, and never spoke again. And when at last there came to him the hour of death, then was he indeed free. Bharata endured the bondage of rebirth no more.

## THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF VIKRAMADITYA

For many centuries in Indian history there was no city so famous as the city of Ujjain. It was always renowned as the seat of learning. Here lived at one time the poet Kalidasa, one of the supreme poets of the world, fit to be named with Homer and Dante and Shakespeare. And here worked and visited, only a hundred and fifty years ago, an Indian king, who was also a great and learned astronomer, the greatest of his day, Raja Jay Singh of Jaipur. So one can see what a great love all who care for India must feel for the ancient city of Ujjain.

But deep in the hearts of the Indian people, one name is held even dearer than those I have mentioned—the name of Vikramaditya, who became King of Malwa, it is said, in the year 57 before Christ. How many, many years ago must that be! But so clearly is he remembered, that to this day when a Hindu wants to write a letter, after putting something religious at the top—"The Name of the Lord," or "Call on the Lord," or something of the sort—and after writing his address, as we all do in beginning a letter, when he states the *date*, he would not say, "of the year of the Lord 1900," for instance, meaning 1900 years after Christ, as we might, but he would say "of the year 1957 of *the Era of Vikramaditya*."\* So we can judge for ourselves whether that name is ever likely to be forgotten in India. Now who was this Vikramaditya, and why was he so loved? The whole of that secret, after so long a time, we can scarcely hope to recover. He was like our King Arthur, or like Alfred the Great—so strong and true and gentle that the men of his own day almost worshipped him, and those of all after times were obliged to give him the first place, though they had never looked in his face, nor appealed to his great and tender heart—simply because they could see

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\* The name of this era is Samvat.

that never king had been loved like this king. But one thing we do know about Vikramaditya. It is told of him that he was the greatest judge in history.

Never was he deceived. Never did he punish the wrong man. The guilty trembled when they came before him, for they knew that his eyes would look straight into their guilt. And those who had difficult questions to ask, and wanted to know the truth, were thankful to be allowed to come, for they knew that their King would never rest till he understood the matter, and that then he would give an answer that would convince all.

And so, in after time in India, when any judge pronounced sentence with great skill, it would be said of him, "Ah, he must have sat in the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya!" And this was the habit of speech of the whole country. Yet in Ujjain itself, the poor people forgot that the heaped-up ruins a few miles away had been his palace, and only the rich and learned, and the wise men who lived in kings' courts, remembered.

The story I am about to tell you happened long, long ago; but yet there had been time for the old palace and fortress of Ujjain to fall into ruins, and for the sand to be heaped up over them, covering the blocks of stone, and bits of old wall, often with grass and dust, and even trees. There had been time, too, for the people to forget.

In those days, the people of the villages, as they do still, used to send their cows out to the wild land to graze.

Early in the morning they would go, in the care of the shepherds, and not return till evening, close on dusk. How I wish I could show you that coming and going of the Indian cows!

Such gentle little creatures they are, with such large wise eyes, and a great hump between their shoulders! And they are not timid or wild, like our cattle. For in India, amongst the Hindus, every one loves them. They are very useful and precious in that hot, dry country, and no one is allowed to tease or frighten them. Instead of that, the little girls



come at day-break and pet them, giving them food and hanging necklaces of flowers about their necks, saying poetry to them, and even strewing flowers before their feet! And the cows, for their part, seem to feel as if they belonged to the family, just as our cats and dogs do.

If they live in the country, they delight in being taken out to feed on the grass in the day-time; but of course some one must go with them, to frighten off wild beasts, and to see that they do not stray too far. They wear little tinkling bells, that ring as they move their heads, saying, "Here! here!" And when it is time to go home to the village for the night, what a pretty sight they make!

One cowherd stands and calls at the edge of the pasture and another goes around behind the cattle, to drive them towards him, and so they come quietly forward from here and there, sometimes breaking down the brush-wood in their path. And when the herdsmen are sure that all are safe, they turn homewards—one leading in front, one bringing up the rear, and the cows making a long procession between them. As they go they kick up the dust along the sun-baked path, till at last they seem to be moving through a cloud, with the last rays of the sunset touching it. And so the Indian people call twilight, cowdust, "the hour of cowdust." It is a very peaceful, a very lovely moment. All about the village can be heard the sound of the children playing. The men are seated, talking, round the foot of some old tree, and the women are gossiping or praying in their houses.

Tomorrow, before dawn, all will be up and hard at work again, but this is the time of rest and joy.

Such was the life of the shepherd boys in the villages about Ujjain. There were many of them, and in the long days on the pastures they had plenty of time for fun. One day they found a playground. Oh, how delightful it was! The ground under the trees was rough and uneven. Here and there the end of a great stone peeped out, and many of these stones were beautifully carven. In the middle was a green mound, looking just like a judge's seat.

One of the boys thought so at least, and he ran forward with a whoop and seated himself on it. "I say, boys," he cried, "I'll be judge and you can all bring cases before me, and we'll have trials!" Then he straightened his face, and became very grave, to act the part of judge.

The others saw the fun at once, and, whispering amongst themselves, quickly made up some quarrel, and appeared before him, saying very humbly, "May your Worship be pleased to settle between my neighbour and me which is in the right?" Then they stated the case, one saying that a certain field was his, another that it was not, and so on.

But now a strange thing made itself felt. When the judge had sat down on the mound, he was just a common boy. But when he had heard the question, even to the eyes of the frolicsome lads, he seemed quite different. He was now full of gravity, and, instead of answering in fun, he took the case seriously, and gave an answer which in that particular case was perhaps the wisest that man had ever heard.

The boys were a little frightened. For though they could not appreciate the judgment, yet his tone and manner were strange and impressive. Still they thought it was fun, and went away again, and, with a good deal more whispering, concocted another case. Once more they put it to their judge, and once more he gave a reply, as it were out of the depth of a long experience, with incontrovertible wisdom. And this went on for hours and hours, he sitting on the judge's seat, listening to the questions propounded by the others, and always pronouncing sentence with the same wonderful gravity and power. Till at last it was time to take the cows home, and then he jumped down from his place, and was just like any other cowherd.

The boys could never forget that day, and whenever they heard of any perplexing dispute they would set this boy on the mound, and put it to him. And always the same thing happened. The spirit of knowledge and justice would come to him, and he would show them the truth. But when he

came down from his seat, he would be no different from other boys.

Gradually the news of this spread through the countryside, and grown-up men and women from all the villages about that part would bring their lawsuits to be decided in the court of the herd-boys on the grass under the green trees. And always they received a judgment that both sides understood, and went away satisfied. So all the disputes in that neighbourhood were settled.

Now Ujjain had long ceased to be a capital, and the King now lived very far away, hence it was some time before he heard the story. At last, however, it came to his ears. "Why," he said, "that boy must have sat on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya!" He spoke without thinking, but all around him were learned men, who knew the chronicles. They looked at one another. "The King speaks truth," they said; "the ruins in yonder meadows were once Vikramaditya's palace!"

Now this sovereign had long desired to be possessed with the spirit of law and justice. Every day brought its problems and difficulties to him, and he often felt weak and ignorant in deciding matters that needed wisdom and strength. "If sitting on the mound brings it to the shepherd boy," he thought, "let us dig deep and find the Judgement-Seat. I shall put it in the chief place in my hall of audience, and on it I shall sit to hear all cases. Then the spirit of Vikramaditya will descend on me also, and I shall always be a just judge!"

So men with spades and tools came to disturb the ancient peace of the pastures, and the grassy knoll where the boys had played was overturned. All about the spot were now heaps of earth and broken wood and upturned sod. And the cows had to be driven further afield. But the heart of the boy who had been judge was sorrowful, as if the very home of his soul was being taken away from him.

At last the labourers came on something. They uncovered it—a slab of black marble, supported on the hands and out-

spread wings of twenty-five stone angels, with their faces turned outwards as if for flight—surely the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.

With great rejoicing it was brought to the city, and the King himself stood by while it was put in the chief place in the hall of justice. Then the nation was ordered to observe three days of prayer and fasting, for on the fourth day the King would ascend the new throne publicly, and judge justly amongst the people.

At last the great morning arrived, and crowds assembled to see the Taking of the Seat. Pacing through the long hall came the judges and priests of the kingdom, followed by the sovereign. Then, as they reached the Throne of Judgment, they parted into two lines, and he walked up the middle, prostrated himself before it, and went close up to the marble slab.

When he had done this, however, and was just about to sit down, one of the twenty-five stone angels began to speak. "Stop!" it said: "Thinkest thou that thou art worthy to sit on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya? Hast thou never desired to bear rule over kingdoms that were not thine own?" And the countenance of the stone angel was full of sorrow.

At these words the King felt as if a light had blazed up within him, and shown him a long array of tyrannical wishes. He knew that his own life was unjust. After a long pause he spoke, "No," he said, "I am *not* worthy."

"Fast and pray yet three days," said the angel, "that thou mayest purify thy will, and make good thy right to seat thyself thereon." And with these words it spread its wings and flew away. And when the King lifted up his face, the place of the speaker was empty, and only twenty-four figures supported the marble slab.

And so there was another three days of royal retreat, and he prepared himself with prayer and with fasting to come again and essay to sit on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.



But this time it was even as before. Another stone angel addressed him, and asked him a question which was yet more searching. "Hast thou *never*," it said, "coveted the riches of another?"

And when at last he spoke and said, "Yea, I have done this thing; I am not worthy to sit on the Judgement-Seat of Vikramaditya!" the angel commanded him to fast and pray yet another three days, and spread its wings and flew away into the blue.

At last four times twenty-four days had gone, and still three more days of fasting, and it was now the hundredth day. Only one angel was left supporting the marble slab, and the King drew near with great confidence, for today he felt sure of being allowed to take his place.

But as he drew near and prostrated, the last angel spoke: "Art thou, then, perfectly pure in heart, O King?" it said. "Is thy will like unto that of a little child? If so, thou art indeed worthy to sit on this seat!"

"No," said the King, speaking very slowly, and once more searching his own conscience, as the judge examines the prisoner at the bar, but with great sadness; "no, I am not worthy."

And at these words the angel flew up into the air, bearing the slab upon his head, so that never since that day has it been seen upon the earth.

But when the King came to himself and was alone, pondering over the matter, he saw that the last angel had explained the mystery. Only he who was pure in heart, like a little child, could be perfectly just. That was why the shepherd boy in the forest could sit where no king in the world might come, on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.

## PRITHVI RAI, LAST OF THE HINDU KNIGHTS

*(The Indian Romeo and Juliet)*

Now in the days of the old Hindu knighthood of India, there were four great cities where strong kings lived, who claimed that between them they ruled the whole of the country. And some of these cities you can find on the map quite easily, for three of them at least are there to this day. They were Delhi, Ajmere, Gujarat, and Kanauj, and one of them, Gujarat, is now known as Ahmedabad.

The King who sat on the throne of Delhi was the very flower of Hindu knights. Young, handsome, and courageous, a fearless horseman and a brave fighter, all the painters in India painted the portrait, and all the minstrels sang the praises, of Prithvi Rai; but loudest of all sang his own dear friend, Chand, the court-bard of Delhi.

Prithvi Rai's life had not been all play by any means. His duty, as a king, was greater than that of other knights, since he had of course to defend his people. And already he had had to fight great battles. For across the border lived a Saracen people under a chief called Mahmud of Ghazni, and six times this chieftain had invaded India, and six times Prithvi Rai had met and overcome him. Only, fighting as a good knight should, for glory and not for greed, each time he had conquered him he had also set him free, and Mahmud had gone home again. And the last of these battles had been fought at Thaneshwar, where the Afgan was badly wounded.

Just at this time, it very unfortunately happened that the King of Ajmere died, and left no son or grandson to succeed him. But he had had a daughter who had married the King of Delhi, and Prithvi Rai was her son. So, as the old man had no son's son to leave his throne to, it seemed natural enough to leave it to his daughter's son, Prithvi Rai, who

thus became King of Delhi and Ajmere, and in this way the most powerful monarch in India. But this made one man very angry. The King of Kanauj claimed that *he* ought to have had Ajmere, for he had been married to a sister of the old King. Probably he had always been jealous of Prithvi Rai, but now he began to hate him with his whole heart.

In all countries always it has been believed that the bravest knight should wed the fairest lady. Now in the India of that day it was accepted on all hands that Prithvi Rai was the bravest knight, but, alas, every one also knew that the most beautiful princess in the world was the daughter of Kanauj! She was tall, graceful, and lovely. Her long, thick hair was black, with a blue light on it, and her large eyes were like the black bee moving in the petals of the white lotus. Moreover, it was said that the maiden was as high-souled and heroic as she was beautiful.

So Prithvi Rai, King of Delhi, determined to win Samyukta, Princess of Kanauj and daughter of his mortal foe, for his own. How was it to be done?

First he went to his old nurse who had brought him up. He prostrated himself before her and touched her feet, calling her "Mother," and she, with a smile, first put her fingers under his chin, and then kissed her own hand. For so mothers and children salute each other in India. Then the King sat down on the floor before her, and told her all that was in his heart.

She listened, and sat without speaking for a few minutes when he had finished. "Well," she said, after a while, "give me only your portrait. I shall send you hers. And I can promise you, that when you win your way to the girl's side, you will find her just as determined as yourself, to marry no one but you."

That evening the old nurse left Delhi with a party of merchants bound for another of the royal cities. And in her baggage, unknown to her humble fellow-travellers, was a tiny portrait on ivory of the King. It was a week or two

afterwards, that the ladies of the King's household, at Kanauj, took an old woman into their service who claimed that she had been born at the court of Ajmere, and had waited, in her childhood, on the late Queen of Kanauj. This old lady soon grew specially fond of the Princess, and was gradually allowed to devote herself to her. In the long, hot hours she would sit fanning and chatting with her, or she would prepare the bath, with its scents and unguents, and herself brush the soles of Samyukta's feet with vermilion paint. Or at night, when the heat made it difficult to sleep, she would steal into some marble pavilion on the roof, and coax the Princess to come out there into the starlight, while she would crouch by her side, with the peacock's fan, and tell her tales of Delhi, and of Prithvi Rai, and his love for her. And often they gazed together at a miniature, which had been sent, said the old woman, by her hand, to ask if the Princess would deign to accept it. For as we all have guessed, of course, it was the old nurse of Prithvi Rai's mother, and of Prithvi Rai himself, who was here, serving the maiden whom he hoped to make his bride.

In a few months, came the time when the King of Kanauj must announce his daughter's marriage. And he determined to call a Swayamvara, that is, a gathering of princes and nobles, amongst whom the princess might come and choose her husband. She would carry a necklace of flowers in her hand, and heralds would go before. At each candidate's throne as they came to it, the praises of that prince, and all his great deeds in battle and tournament, would be declared by the heralds. Then the Princess would pause a moment and if she decided that this was the knight whom she desired to choose for her husband, she would signify the fact by throwing her garland round his neck. And then the Swayamvara would turn into a wedding, and all the rival princes would take their places as guests. This was a ceremony only used for a royal maiden and naturally no one was ever asked whom it would not be desirable for her to choose.

In this case, invitations were sent to the kings and princes



of all the kingdoms, save only of Delhi, and all India knew that the most beautiful princess in the world was about to hold her Swayamvara.

This was the time for Prithvi Rai to act. So he and his friend Chand, the court-bard, disguised themselves as minstrels, and rode all the way to Kanauj, determined to be present at the Swayamvara, whatever it might cost.

At last the great day dawned, and Samyukta made ready for the bridal choice. Very sad at heart was she, for she knew not what the day might bring forth, only she was sure that of her own free will she would marry none but Prithvi Rai, and he had not even been asked to the ceremony.

The insult thus done to the knight of whom she dreamed, burned like fire in the heart of the Princess, and she wondered contemptuously which of the princes whom she would meet in the hall of choice, could dare to stand before the absent King of Delhi on the field of battle. And something of her father's own pride and courage rose in her against her father himself, as the hour drew near for the Swayamvara to open. Yet behind all this lay the dull misery of the question: What could she possibly do to announce her silent choice in the absence of the hero? A princess might choose amongst those present, but to speak the name of one who was absent would be a fall unheard of from the royal dignity! How the brow of the Rajput maiden throbbed as they bound on it the gold fillets of her marriage-day! How the wrists burned, on which they fastened the bridal ornaments! And the feet and ankles, loaded with their tiny golden bells, which would tinkle as their owner walked, like "running water" in the bed of the streamlet, how glad they would have been to carry Samyukta away into seclusion, where she might do anything rather than face the ordeal before her!

At last, however, the dreaded hour had come. Seated on thrones in the hall of choice, the long array of knights and princes held their breath as they caught the first distant

sounds of the blare of trumpets preceding the princess. Nearer and nearer came the heralds, and so silent was the company that presently, underneath all the noise and clang of the procession without, could be heard distinctly, throughout the great hall, the tinkle of anklets, and they knew that the queen of that bridal day was approaching.

As for Samyukta herself, as with slow footsteps and bent head she paced along the pathway from the castle to the door-way of the hall, she saw no one amongst the many thousands, on foot and on horse-back, beside the path. Had she but once looked up, the whole scene would have been changed for her, and in a moment she might have made her choice. But this was not to be. Lower and lower bent the head of the royal maiden beneath her long rich veil. Tighter and tighter were clasped the hands that with their firm hold on the marriage-garland, hung down before her. And slower and slower were the footsteps with which she drew near to the hall of choice, till she had reached the door itself. But there the proud daughter of king raised her head high, to lower it never again. For one moment she paused, startled, dismayed, incredulous, and then, with flushed cheeks and haughty air, drawing herself up to her full height, she entered the hall of choice with perfect calm. For here at the entrance to the pavilion stood a grotesque wooden figure of the King of Delhi, made to stand like a door-keeper, to wait at the marriage of the chosen knight. At first Samyukta could not believe her own eyes. The image was hideous, mean, and dwarfish, but it was unmistakably intended for Prithvi Rai. Had it not been insult enough to the gallant knight that his name had been omitted from the list of guests, that Kanauj should add to this the madness of mockery? Yet so it was. And as soon as she had realised it, the daughter of the King knew also her own part in the day's great ceremonies, and whatever might be the outcome for herself, she would play it to the end. The princes rose to their feet as the veiled maiden entered, and then sat down once more on their various thrones. The heralds fell back at

the entrance, making room now for the Princess to precede them. And then, with slow firm steps, she, whose each foot-fall was music, passed on from throne to throne, waiting quietly for the questioning cry of her own heralds, and the answering salutation of those about the enthroned prince, before she could listen to the tale of brave deeds by which each bard sought to glorify his own master in the eyes of the fair lady. But at each throne, after patiently listening, after giving every opportunity to its adherents to urge their utmost, the veiled Princess paused a moment and passed on. And something in her bearing of quiet disdain told each whom she left behind her, that she required more of the knight she would choose than he had yet attained. But the sadness of disappointment gave place to astonishment, as Samyukta drew near to the last throne, and stood listening as patiently and as haughtily as ever. This prince, as all thought, she must perforce accept. Round his neck she must throw the marriage-garland. With veil knotted to his cloak, she must at his side step forward to the sacred fire. These things she must do, for now there was no alternative. Yet none of these things did the daughter of the King attempt. Her slender form looked right queenly, and even beneath her veil her courage and triumph were plain to be seen as she turned her back on the whole assembly, as if to pass out of the hall of choice, and then stood a moment in the open door-way, and—threw the garland round the neck of the caricature of Prithvi Rai!

Her father, seated at the end of the hall, high above the guests, sprang to his feet with a muttered oath! From the marriage-bower to the darkness of the dungeon, was this the choice that his daughter would make? What else could she mean by such a defiance? But scarcely had he strode a foot's length from his place when a tall horseman from amongst the crowd was seen to stoop down over the form of the Princess, and, lifting her to his saddle, gallop off out of sight, followed by another. For Prithvi Rai and his friend Chand had not failed to be present at Samyukta's Swayam-

vara, knowing well that though the King of Delhi was not amongst the guests, yet no other than he to whom her heart was given would be chosen by the peerless daughter of Kanauj.

And then the festive hall became the scene of a council of war. The King of Kanauj swore a mighty oath that to the enemies of Delhi he would henceforth prove a friend. The outraged princes added their promises to his, and runners were sent across the border with letters to Mahmud of Ghazni, offering him the alliance of Kanauj in his warfare against Prithvi Rai. The day that had dawned so brightly went down in darkness amidst mutterings of the coming storm. For the wedding day of Samyukta was to prove the end of all the ages of the Hindu knighthood.

A year had passed. To Prithvi Rai and his bride it had passed like a dream. Amongst the gardens and pavilions of the palace they had wandered hand in hand. And Prithvi Rai, lost in his happiness, had forgotten, as it seemed, the habits of the soldier. Nor did Samyukta remember the wariness and alertness that are proper to great kings. It was like a cup of rich wine drunk before death. Yet were these two right royal souls, and knew well how to meet the end. Suddenly broke the storm of war. Suddenly came the call to meet Mahmud of Ghazni on the field of action. And then, without a tear, did Samyukta fasten her husband's armour, and buckle on his sword, and kiss the royal jewel that she was to place in the front of his helmet. And while the battle raged around the standard of Delhi, she waited, cold and collected in the palace. What had she to fear? The funeral fire stood ready, if the worst news should come. Not for her to see the downfall of her country. Was she not the daughter and the wife of kings?

Hours passed away, and ever on and farther onwards rolled the tide of battle—on one side the infuriated Kanauj, fighting by the side of the alien in faith and race, and on the other Prithvi Rai with his faithful troops. Splendidly fought the adherents of the King of Delhi. But in the end



the advantage of numbers prevailed, and Prithvi Rai fell, pierced to the heart, at the foot of his own banner.

It was dark when they brought the news to Samyukta, waiting in the shadows of the palace. But red grew the night with the funeral fire, when she had heard. For her eye brightened when they told her, and her lips smiled. "Then must I haste to my lord where he awaits me," said this Rajput queen gaily, and with the words she sprang into the flames.

So passed away the old Hindu kings and queens of Delhi, and all things were changed in India, and Mohammedan sovereigns reigned in their stead.

Note: On pages 326 and 332 'Mahmud of Ghazni' should read 'Mahmud of Ghur'.—*Ed.*

## A CYCLE FROM THE MAHABHARATA

### THE STORY OF BHISHMA AND THE GREAT WAR

For sixty miles outside "the rose-red walls" of modern Delhi, the plain is strewn with ruins. Broken columns and huge masses of masonry lie there, as if they had been tossed about by giants in their play. Here and there is some stone pillar or other monument of special importance. Such is the marble-screened enclosure where a gentle Moslem princess sleeps her last sleep, amidst the bright sunlight and the chasing shadows. Such is the lofty pillar of Ashoka, with its inscription, and such is the old walled town of Indraprastha, three or four miles from the gates of the present fortress.

It is a strange old place. The few inhabitants of today live, something like the cream in a bowl of milk, in a top layer of streets and houses. The cottage-yard in which one watches rice parching, or clothes being hung out to dry, is made on the roof of an older dwelling, and that perhaps on another. So that after one has rambled awhile through Indraprastha it becomes easy to believe that the city is ancient, and even to imagine that it may first have been built by King Yudhishthira, four or five thousand years ago.

For that is the claim,—that Indraprastha was first built before the Great War broke out, by the Pandava heroes, Yudhishthira and his four brothers, and that it was their capital until the day when all their enemies were slain, and they went in state to Hastinapura, near the modern Meerut, to reign as sovereigns over the whole country.

What a district it is! Rome, with all her ruins, is not so old, nor so imposing. From Thaneshwar, fifty miles to the west of Delhi, to Meerut, thirty miles to the north, the whole country is covered with the remains of ancient buildings, and the memories of ancient war. Many times has the supre-

macy of India been decided on this spot, once by Yudhishthira, in the battle of Kurukshetra, again by Prithvi Rai and Mahmud of Ghazni, and many times since then, even down to the other day.

But it is far away from these last, back into the twilight of time, that we wish to go—back as far as those early days of the Pandava knights, and their cousins the Kurus, when the country was known as “Maha Bharata,” Great India, because she was the mother of heroes, and their deeds were the deeds of the great. In those days, the chief of both clans alike was Bhishma, “the Grandsire,” as he was called, and he was equally loved and respected by all. He was not the King, but, greater still, the maker and director of kings, and amidst all the events of that stirring time his form looms large on his great battle-charger, like that of some mystic Arthur of an earlier age. Bhishma was not the King, but he had been born to the throne, and of his own free-will had given up his right.

It had happened in this wise. When he was still young, having been brought up in great splendour, as the only son, and heir-apparent, of Shantanu the King, a strange thing befell. His father, the sovereign of the country, fell in love with a beautiful maiden, who was nothing but a fisherman’s daughter!

This fisherman, however, was very fine and proud, and would not hear of his daughter marrying out of her proper rank. If she did this, he said, it would only be to bring undeserved humiliation upon herself. It was true that she would live for the rest of her life in a palace, but in that palace who would she be? None would look upon her as the Queen, for no son of hers would even be considered fit to inherit the throne. Only if her son could be made crown-prince, instead of Bhishma, would he consent to her wedding the King. This meant that the fisherman could not take the proposal seriously. So strong were all men, in the days of the heroes!

Of course the condition named was out of the question,

and as soon as King Shantanu understood that the girl's father really meant what he said, he withdrew his suit. But it was impossible to forget the beautiful maiden herself, and every one saw that the King was sad at heart. Even the Prince began to notice it, and to inquire the reason why, and after a while he found some member of the court to tell him the story. How unexpected was the result! No sooner did Bhishma understand the cause of his father's sorrow, than he called for his chariot, and set out to visit the house of the fisherman. On arriving there, he inquired carefully whether there were not some reason for the refusal of marriage, other than that which had been assigned. But the fisherman assured him that there was not. If it had been possible to make his daughter the mother of future kings, he would by no means have objected to her entering the royal household.

"Then," said the Prince, "the matter should be easily settled, for I am perfectly willing to give up all right to the throne, in favour of the children of your daughter Satyawati."

"Ah, Sir," said the fisherman, "it is easy for you to promise, and easy for *you* to keep! I believe in your good-will. But you will marry some day, and what about your sons? *They* will not be willing to forgo a crown, simply because such was your intention!"

The Prince saw the truth of these words, and quietly determining that his father's happiness was dearer to him than all the world besides, he made up his mind to another great vow. "I promise you," he said, "that I shall never marry. So I can never have a child to lay claim to the succession. And now, will you allow me to take your daughter to my father?"

"The fisher-maiden was led forth veiled, and the Prince saluted her as his mother, and placed her in his own chariot. Then, taking the place of the charioteer, he gathered up the reins, and drove straight to the door-way of the palace.

Shantanu could hardly believe his eyes, when the bride



that he had desired was led before him, by the son for whose sake he had silently renounced her. But when he understood how and why she had come, he felt a sudden awe of the selflessness of his own child, and named him for the first time "Bhishma, the Terrible," blessing him with a wonderful blessing. "Go forth, my son," said the King, "knowing that as long as thou shalt desire to live, none can ever endanger thy life. Death himself shall never be able to approach thee, without first obtaining thine own consent." The blessing of father or mother always creates destiny, and long, long afterwards Bhishma, on his lonely death-bed beside the lake of Kurukshetra, was to prove the truth of the King's words.

From this time on the life of the Prince was half that of a monk. Full of knightly deeds he was, but, like some great knight-templar, no act was performed for his own benefit, but always for the safety of his order or the commonwealth. It was his part to crown kings and then serve them, protecting their kingdoms for them. Satyavati, the Queen, had two sons; but one died young, in the early years of her widowhood, and it seemed as if the royal line might become extinct. With tears, then, she, now the Queen-mother, but once a simple fisher-maiden, implored Bhishma the Prince to marry, releasing him over and over again from his promise.

But nothing would induce him to break his vow. Instead, he went, like a monk clad in armour, to the Swayamvara of the princesses of a neighbouring kingdom, and challenged all the other guests to fight. Then he won each duel in turn, and ended by carrying off the three daughters of the King, to be the wives of Satyavati's son. With breathless pride and admiration had the royal maidens watched the prowess of the strange knight. His strength was indeed terrible. Every antagonist went down before him. And his armour shone in the sunlight with gold and jewels. But the eldest of the three sisters turned pale, as one after another each comba-

tant was beaten, and it became evident that they were to have no choice at all at their Swayamvara.

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At last they all set out for Hastinapura, and the warrior, who at the tournament had been invincible in his might, came riding beside their litters, and chatting gaily with them through the curtains. So gentle and so courtly was he in his bearing; that presently, with many blushes and some sighs, the eldest princess turned to speak with him of a secret sorrow. She and a certain king had long, she said, felt love for one another, and had secretly plighted their word to choose and be chosen at the bridal feast. But now the strong arm that had won them all, to be the brides of Hastinapura, was parting her and her betrothed for ever.

The knightly Bhishma did all he could to offer comfort to the poor bride, and secretly sent messengers to summon her lover to the court. So, a few days later, when the wedding was commencing and brides and bridegroom were bidden to take their first look at each other, for the lucky moment was come, it was only the two younger sisters, who, opening their eyes shyly, found the King of Hastinapura before them. But, alas, the affianced husband of the eldest princess was not there, as Bhishma had hoped and striven to have him. For he regarded his betrothed as now wedded to another, and refused to come and take her to himself. And she, poor lady, feeling unspeakably dishonoured by this refusal, but unable to be angry with the prince whose name she loved, prayed earnestly to the gods to let her, girl as she was, become a knight, that she might some day meet Bhishma face to face on the field of battle, and bring about his death. And her prayer was granted. And so, from this day onwards, the dark shadow of destiny lay ever across the path of the great and knightly warrior, and the footsteps of death were never far off from him.

Now the young King of Hastinapura lived happily with his two queens for seven years. Then he died, and they were left widows. But they had three sons—Dhritarashtra the

Blind, Pandu the Pale, and Vidura the Just. So once more Bhishma was left with the education of princes who were not his sons, and the care of a kingdom that was not his own, upon his hands. He found wives for Dhritarashtra and for Pandu, and bestowed the royal domains on them.

It is told of Gandhari, the Princess of Gandhara, or Afghanistan,\* bride of the blind King Dhritarashtra, that, when she heard of his infirmity, she bound her own eyes also with many folds of cloth, and vowed to remain thus sightless throughout her life. For she could not bear to enjoy the light from which her husband was shut out.

The wife of Pandu the Pale was known as Pritha or Kunti, and she became the mother of three of the five Pandavas, as they were called. Yudhishtira, Bhima and Arjuna, the other two being the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, her step-sons. Everyone loved these boys, for they were full of great qualities, and the heart of Bhishma was glad, for he saw that Yudhishtira, the eldest of all the princes, had in him the making of a perfect king. Prince Pandu, the father, died suddenly in the forest, and Dhritarashtra declared that the young Yudhishtira should be regarded henceforth as the heir to both kingdoms.

But, alas, amongst the two families of Pandavas and Kurus, that called Bhishma Grandsire, there was one false heart—that of Duryodhana, head of the Kurus and eldest of the hundred and one children of Dhritarashtra the King!

All the princely cousins had grown up side by side; they had had the same lessons; they had played together. But the strength of Bhima, second of the Pandavas, was so great that, unaided, he could hold any ten of the Kurus under water at the same time. This of itself angered Duryodhana, and he could obtain no redress, for Bhima always won the victory again. But it was not only Bhima. The young Yudhishtira was specially beloved for his gentleness and heroic uprightness, and Arjuna threw himself with such

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\* Gandhara was a country bordering on, and in part including Afghanistan.

devotion into every task that he was the most skilful archer of them all, and the favourite of their tutor, Drona, the Brahmin.

Perhaps it was natural that the young chief of the Kurus should be made jealous by all this brilliance. But it was not knightly. Duryodhana, indeed, had courage and skill and princely daring, but not the sunny temper and generous heart of the true knight. There was a vein of treachery and skilful cunning in him, and he was too remorseless an enemy to be a perfect friend.

Long, long afterwards, when Bhishma lay dying, and when all his life was passing in review before him, as it does before the eyes of dying men, he could look back on the youth of these children of his house, and trace clearly the growth of the hatred that had led to the Great War. Every year of Duryodhana's life had added to its bitterness, and he had been unscrupulous in striving to satisfy his enmity.

Once he had tried to poison Bhima, and had almost succeeded, but the Prince had recovered, after eight days of a deathlike swoon. Again, he had formed a dastardly plot to entrap the Pandavas and their mother into a lonely house and set it on fire. This conspiracy also had seemed to succeed, yet by the warning of Vidura, their uncle, the little company had escaped and taken shelter in the cottage of a village potter.

It was at this very time, when all things were against them, that the real greatness of these princes had been proved. For they had attended the Swayamvara of the daughter of Drupada, King of Panchala, and, beggars as they seemed, had carried off the Princess, in face of all the splendour and wealth of India's sovereigns:

The bride, Draupadi, proved, as does always the perfect wife, to be the good star of the house into which she had thus entered. Amongst other things, at the bridal tournament itself, they had for the first time become aware of one whom to know and love was like winning the vision of the Holy Grail.



High up amongst the royal guests, beside His Uncle, the King of the Vrishnis, stood a form, dark almost as the midnight sky, and clad in yellow. It was the Lord Krishna—the Holy Knight. And He, looking down upon the five brothers, was not deceived by their humble garb, but knew at once who and what they were.

Above all, He saw in Arjuna that one soul destined to behold the wondrous vision of Himself as the Universal Form. Already there sounded in His ears the words of the hymn of adoration, that would be associated with his name through all ages.

“Hail to Thee! hail! a thousand times, hail! and again and again, hail to Thee!” Arjuna would sing, in the midst of illumination on the battle-field. “Victory to Thee in the east, and victory in the west! Victory through all the Universe be Thine! For infinite in power, and infinite in will, pervading all, Thou art the All.” And then, faltering with excess of memory, the chant would tremble and change, and the worshipper would cry, “What in the past I have ignorantly uttered, from irreverence or from love, calling upon Thee as ‘O Krishna! O Yadava! O Beloved!’ looking upon Thee merely as a mortal friend, unenlightened of this, Thy divine greatness, all such I implore Thee, O Ineffable, to forgive!”

And Krishna, to whom past, present, and future were all alike an open book, threw the mantle of his friendship over the Pandava heroes, from this first hour of Draupadi’s Swayamvara. All these things passed before the eyes of the dying Grandsire, like a play seen in a dream.

Shielded by the relationship now existing between Draupadi’s kindred and themselves, and protected by their alliance with Krishna, the powerful minister of the Vrishni State, Yudhishtira and his brothers had next proceeded to resume their name and dignities. Then the news had been carried to Hastinapura, that they still lived, and Bhishma himself, full of thankfulness that the stain of the blood-guilt was wiped off his nephew’s name, had insisted on Dhrita-

rashtra's recalling the Pandavas, and assigning to them half the kingdom.

Those were the days of the building of Indraprastha—for that part of the realm that was given to Yudhishtira was wild and covered with jungle, lying towards the Jamuna. Yet such were the patience and industry of the young heroes, and such the skill of the eldest in good government, that it was not long before they had erected this mighty city, with foundations so deep, that ages would pass and leave the walls still standing; with fortifications so strong that armies would never be able to destroy it; and with a site so well chosen that over it, or some city near by, should always float the standard of India's rulers. All these things did Bhishma remember.

And when they were well established in their new capital, the Pandavas had laid all the surrounding kings under tribute, and proclaimed the Royal Sacrifice, where fealty should be sworn. And Bhishma smiled, as the imperial pageant passed before his eyes.

But the splendours of Indraprastha, and the proud ceremonies of the Homage of Vassals, had inflicted countless new wounds on the jealous heart of Duryodhana, so that he determined in his wrath to compass the ruin of his cousins. And the cheeks of the dying chieftain were crimsoned with shame and sorrow, as he remembered how the son of Dhritarashtra had consulted eagerly with the false-hearted and cowardly as to the method of his treachery. At last a brother of Gandhari, the Queen, suggested that he should challenge Yudhishtira to a game of dice with himself—he being skilful at play—and that the Kuru dice should be loaded, that he might lead the Pandavas to the loss of all their possessions under the semblance of a game. It was well known that the young Emperor loved gambling, though he showed little skill, and that a formal challenge to throw for the stakes was deemed by him as sacred as the call to battle.

The message was duly issued and received, and the Pandava heroes, with Draupadi, set out for Hastinapura, to

play the fatal game. For a moment, Yudhishtira was startled, to find, on his arrival, that Duryodhana himself would not be his antagonist. Then he recalled the form of the challenge, and realising that honour demanded acceptance of any odds, he staked and threw. Staked, threw, and lost, alas! Again he tried, with larger risks. Then the fever of the gamester came upon him. It never occurred to him that the play was false. Again and again he threw, always with odds increased—and always the game went against him, till in one short hour he who had entered Hastinapura as Overlord of all India, stood beggared and a bondsman, beside four brothers, who, with his wife, were all alike the slaves of Duryodhana.

It was now that the first of the Kurus committed his most unknighly deed. A younger brother was sent to the Queen's apartments, to bring Draupadi into the presence of the gamblers. Insulting hands were laid upon her beautiful hair, and she was dragged, resisting, into the Court. The head, it must be remembered, is always sacred, and surely doubly inviolable should Draupadi's have been, having so lately been sprinkled with anointing water, in her husband's coronation.

The riotous scene progressed. Thinking to complete the degradation of the Pandavas, but really working to invoke ruin on themselves, the same rude hands that had just been laid in sacrilege on the hair of the Queen, now attempted to snatch away her Sari, that she might stand in this public place unveiled. But Draupadi called on Krishna in her heart, and clung to His name, and lo, the scarf and veil that were being plucked from her, were miraculously multiplied, and hundreds upon hundreds of such garments were thrown aside by the despoilers, yet was not the Queen for one moment disrobed! Against their own will, these disorderly men of the royal household stood covered with shame, while the wrathful Pandavas touched the depths of silent misery and defeat, bound by the pledges of Yudhishtira.

At this very moment there was a sudden hush, and all rose

to their feet, for the old blind Dhritarashtra, summoned by Bhishma, was being led, trembling, into his son's presence. Tears rained from his sightless eyes, as he stretched out his hands in appeal to Duryodhana.

"My son! my son! is this madness?" he cried. "Forget you that as a mother's blessing works a man's greatest good, so a woman's sorrow brings him supreme woe? Why should you outrage this proud and helpless Queen, unless, indeed, ye be wearied of the good days, and desire to bring destruction on your father and his house?" And then, as if in a vain desire to mitigate the force of the coming doom, by winning some measure of goodwill from the hapless woman, the old man turned himself to Draupadi, "Speak, my daughter!" he commanded tremulously, "Name three boons that I can grant to you. This at least remains, that *I* am free to restore whatever *you* may ask!"

The heroic consort of the Pandavas drew herself up to her full height, and the clear cold tones of her wonderful voice rang through the hall. "I speak, O King, as a free woman," she began, "for he who has sold himself into slavery has no power over the free to make them bondsmen. Yudhishtira first bartered his own freedom, therefore could he claim no control over his wife's!" The King nodded his assent, and Draupadi went on. "I demand, then, the freedom of Yudhishtira, that no son of mine henceforth may have to claim a slave for his father!"

"Granted," said Dhritarashtra briefly. "Ask again."

"Next," said Draupadi, "I beg the same for his four brothers, with all their weapons."

"This also I grant," said the blind King; "and what is your demand in gold and other wealth?"

"Nay," said the stately Draupadi, with a flash of mingled scorn and pride, "I ask no more! The Pandavas, being free, can right themselves—they need owe no man anything!"

Dhritarashtra shuddered, as if a cold blast had swept over him, even while he bent before the courage of the Queen. For her refusal to accept his amends seemed to him as a



terrible curse upon his house. But Duryodhana's soul had become blinder by reason of his enmity, than were the bodily eyes of his two parents. He pressed forward eagerly.

"Nay, O my father!" he cried, thrusting himself before Dhritarashtra, "I also will consent to this restoration if thou wilt grant me but one condition more! Let these Pandavas and their wife go forth free, but let them live in the forests, as a forfeit, for twelve years, and spend their thirteenth year in disguise, wherever they will. At the end of these thirteen years, if they are not discovered by me or by my friends, let them be indeed free. But if in their thirteenth year we track them out, another twelve years of exile pays the penalty. One throw more of the dice to settle it!"

All waited, breathless, for the King's answer. What would he do? Which side would he take? But a moment before it had seemed as if, with Draupadi's help, he might break the spell of disaster that Duryodhana's licence was about to cast over the royal house. Now the shadow of evil, bringing woe behind it, threatened to enwrap them all again. Where, and on which side, would the King be found?

Alas, overborne by his son's impetuosity, Dhritarashtra nodded consent. Yudhishtira accepted the challenge, and the fatal dice were once more thrown and lost!

The Pandava princes saluted the King, and turned to go. "But," said Dhritarashtra, raising a warning hand to detain them, and speaking loudly in the hearing of all the nobles present. "But,—if my son fail to discover your hiding-place, then, on the day that ends the thirteen years, know, O Heroes, that yours is the right to return to your home and to your empire, free men and princes as but yesterday ye came forth."

Duryodhana and the little group of lawless courtiers gathered round him, bit their lips in anger at what they considered his father's needless generosity. But the promise was already spoken, and could not be recalled. The five knights were gone. And in her distant chamber Pritha was saying farewell to her sons for thirteen years.

These scenes also passed before the eyes of Bhishma. He remembered all.

Twelve years of forest life went by, and but for Draupadi's mortified pride of womanhood, they might have been years of unclouded happiness. Great sages, and Krishna Himself, came to visit the heroes in their retirement, and often they wandered forth on delightful pilgrimages. Once, indeed, Duryodhana and his guard, visiting the neighbourhood where they chanced to be, fell into trouble, and were made prisoners of war. Then the Pandava brothers, hearing of their plight, sallied forth on a raid of liberation, and enabled them to go back to Hastinapura.

Oh, with what bitterness had Duryodhana come home from this expedition! Bhishma smiled sadly to himself, as the picture of the return passed before him. How the Prince had sat upon the ground, refusing food, and how at last he only rose, as it appeared to onlookers, when new hopes and plans for vengeance were matured within his heart!

There was a lonely place in the jungle, where men's feet never trod. Here, as the twelve years drew to an end, Yudhishtira and his brothers came, with their weapons all wrapped up to look like corpses, and hung them on the trees; for so it was the fashion of those days to do oftentimes with the bodies of the dead. Then they sought menial employment in the household of a neighbouring king, and in this concealment the last year passed away.

And now at last the thirteen years were ended, and the Pandavas demanded the restoration of their kingdom. Alas! the chief place amongst Dhritarashtra's counsellors had long been held by that false knight, his son. The weakness that had always had place in Dhritarashtra's character had grown with the years, and he was now completely under the influence of Duryodhana. Justice called for the cession of Indraprastha and half the kingdom. The King's own words were fresh in all memories. Krishna Himself pleaded in person that right should be done. Bhishma, as chief of the kingdom, pointed out sternly the peril that lay in breaking a

pledge, and declaring war on the allies of Krishna. But the awful fate that works in the affairs of men had borne everything before it. Even now it would seem as if Duryodhana might have saved himself and his fortunes by the simple right. But, infatuated, he refused to listen, and proceeded with his organisation of the army and other warlike preparations. Bhishma himself was compelled by his allegiance to take the part of commander-in-chief.

The dying minister and warrior must have covered his eyes as he came to this point in his reverie. For the panorama of destruction was still so fresh that it could scarcely present itself in pictures: the trumpets of battle, the neighing of horses, the trampling of elephants, and the whiz of arrows were still in his ears. He saw now the black doom of the Kurus, created by Duryodhana's own tyranny and falsehood, gathering to a head, and sweeping the honour of Dhritarashtra into the gulf of time.

Here was the actual field of battle, and on it the mind could see once more, drawn up in battle array, the two great armies, the largest that the India of that day had ever seen. On the one side were the hosts of Duryodhana, led by Bhishma, Drona, and others; on the other, the troops of the Pandavas, headed by the five brothers, their sons, and their allies. The chariots of the commanders were drawn by milk-white horses; over each waved a banner, bearing the cognisance of its chief—Bhishma's was a lofty palm-tree, Arjuna's an embroidered monkey; and a lion's tail, a bull, a peacock, and an elephant-robe, were amongst the devices. In the hands of each hero and his charioteer were white conch-shells, to be used as trumpets, and on receiving the signal for battle all would answer by putting these to their lips, and blowing on them a mighty blast. Standing in their places in either army were the great lines of elephants—the real walls of ancient India—and on the neck of each sat his driver, whose life was held inviolable in the warfare of that time.\*

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\* Elephants unguided are apt to be seized by panic, and then they will trample all before them indiscriminately.

The combat began. The various divisions fought hand to hand in a series of *mêlées*. A chieftain in one army would single out some standard in the other which he particularly desired to capture, and he and his contingent would make a rush upon it, and fight for its possession till all his opponents were dead, or he repulsed. So the battle surged to and fro on the broad fields of Kurukshetra, for nine whole days. Then it became evident to the Pandava brothers that they could never hope to win the victory while Bhishma the Grandsire remained alive.

That night, when darkness had descended, and the soldiers of both hosts lay chatting round the tiny fires on which they had cooked their evening meal, the old Protector was startled to see the curtain of his tent door lifted noiselessly, and the five brothers steal noiselessly into his presence. The heart of Bhishma was glad at the sight of these men, whom he loved as his own sons, and he motioned them to a seat before him. Arjuna was perhaps his favourite, but for Yudhishtira he felt a special responsibility, inasmuch as in his hands would always lie supreme authority over men and kingdoms.

He waited for them to speak, and at last the eldest broke the silence. "Grandfather," he said, "it is impossible for us to achieve victory so long as thou remainest leader of the Kuru hosts, and yet Yama himself, as all men know, cannot draw near to thee without first obtaining thy consent. We have come, therefore, to crave from thee the permit of death, and to beg the knowledge of how we may hope to slay thee. For all our attempts during the past nine days have failed."

The aged knight smiled gently. Now indeed had the moment of release arrived. He held in his own hands power over his own life, and never in all these long years till now had there been a moment in which, without shirking his duty, he could have left the world. But here all this was changed. For the Doom of the Kurus must break, and the Triumph of the Pandavas be established, and man may not stand in the path of events. That same faithfulness that had



so long bidden him to stay, was now calling him to go. The hours of servitude were over, the moment of rest was nigh at hand.

"It is true, my child," he said to Yudhishtira, "it is in vain that you look for victory while I lead the Kuru hosts; and neither may you hope to slay me while I hold my weapons and fight for life. Yet there are certain things before which I lay down my arms. Note them well. Before those who are afraid, those who are weak from wounds or illness, those who have surrendered to my mercy, and any who were born woman, I will not fight. If you attack me to-morrow from behind one such, you will achieve my death."

Then the five heroes remembered that knight named Shikhandin, who had been born a woman and had obtained knighthood by special favour of the gods. It must be Shikhandin whom Bhishma meant. So it was arranged that on the tenth day Arjuna should fight from behind this knight, piercing Bhishma on every side with arrows. A wave of love and fierce remorse swept over the young knight as the plans were completed, and he spoke with broken accents of those days of childhood in which he had played about the feet of Bhishma, and told how once he had climbed on his knee and called him "Father." "Nay, little one, but thy *father's father*," had been the tender answer. How could one so caressed aim the arrow of death at the heart of this beloved warrior? And it was Bhishma himself who had at this moment to remind the soldier of his knightly duty, and nerve him to the stern performance of the morrow's task.

The day rose bright, and the battle began. Heartily Bhishma plunged into the struggle, and wherever he went, the chariot of Arjuna with its milk-white steeds, pursued him. Shikhandin stood foremost, beside Krishna, the Charioteer, and Arjuna, from behind the maiden-knight, shot arrow after arrow at the head of his house. Scorning to shoot at one who had been a girl, Bhishma would laughingly aim a shaft at Arjuna, whenever a sudden turn of the wheels gave him a chance. As so much play seemed

to him those darts which clustered thicker and thicker on his own person. But when sunset drew near, the hour for the mortal wound being come, he received an arrow straight in his heart, and fell from his chariot to the ground.

Even now, however, Death could not draw near to Bhishma. In the moment of his fall, the thought flashed into his mind that he was about to die in the dark half of the sun's year, a time most unfortunate for great souls, and he determined to remain alive six months, that he might die in the summer solstice.

The leaders of both sides crowded round him, having doffed their armour in token of truce. They would have carried him away to comfortable quarters, but he would have none of it. "The hero's bed," he said, "is where he falls. I desire no other. But I need a pillow!" He had fallen on the broad ends of those arrows which had struck him behind, and his shoulders being thereby lifted, his head hung down. One and another ran and brought him cushions. Their luxury was fit for kings. But the old saint-warrior shook his head. "Arjuna, child!" he said, looking towards him who had provided him with his hard bed, standing now speechless with grief. Arjuna understood the request, and shot three arrows downwards into the earth, with such sure aim that they made the support the mighty bowman required.

Bhishma gave a sigh of relief, and ordered that a trench should be dug about him, and he be left without tent or furnishings, to spend the remaining months in solitary worship. Next day, however, needing water, he had recourse again to Arjuna and his arrows, and a great spring burst forth at that place where the soldier shot his bolt into the earth, so that the ear of Bhishma was soothed with the sound of running water, until the day of his actual departure. Such at least is the legend of the people concerning the great pond that sparkles still on the lonely plain of Kurukshetra.

Of the remainder of Bhishma's life, men speak to this day with bated breath. Eight long days more the battle raged beside him, and at the end, the Doom-cloud of the Kurus

had broken, and carried all away with it, and the Triumph of the Pandavas was established. For the five brothers stood victorious, with all their foes lying slain about them. Then the tide of war ebbed away from Kurukshetra, and Bhishma, through sunny days and starry nights, kept his long vigil, while months passed by for the victorious Pandavas, in the business entailed by victories and the government of kingdoms.

At last, however, Yudhishthira—again a new-crowned monarch, but of a wider realm than ever—was free to turn with his brothers, and follow Krishna to where their dying clansman lay. The young sovereign desired that he, who had seen three generations of kings, should give him his blessing, and pass on to him his long-garnered lore of statecraft.

And the Holy Knight Himself laid healing hands of coolness and peace on the burning frame and anguished wounds of the warrior-saint, so that his mind grew as clear and his speech as strong as in former years, and he revealed all his wisdom to these adopted sons of his old age.

Fifty days later the Pandavas once more drew near to Bhishma, knowing that the time had come that he would die. Before he passed away, his last whispered blessing was still for Yudhishthira, left to fulfil the heavy task of kings. But he died, fixing all his thought on Krishna, and so united himself with the Eternal, to live for ever in the love and memory of India as Bhishma the Terrible, her great and stainless knight, who lived as he had died, and died as he had lived, without fear and without reproach.

## THE ASCENT OF YUDHISHTHIRA INTO HEAVEN

To Arjuna, when Krishna passed away, the whole earth became a blank. He could no longer string his great bow, Gandiva, and his divine weapons failed to come to his hand at need, for he could not concentrate his mind upon them. Therefore he understood that his time was ended. He and his brothers had accomplished the great purpose of their lives. The moment had come for their departure from the world.

For to all it is known that understanding and courage and foresight arise in us, only so long as the days of our prosperity are not outrun, and all alike leave a man, when the hour of his adversity strikes. Such things have Time only for their root. It is Time, indeed, that is the seed of the Universe. And verily it is Time who takes back all at his own pleasure. Arjuna saw, therefore, that to the place whence his invincible weapons had come to him, thither had they been withdrawn again, having, in the day given them, achieved the victories that had been theirs. He realised, moreover, that when the time for his use of them should again approach, they would return of their own accord into his hands. Meanwhile, it was for himself and his four brothers to set their faces resolutely, towards the attainment of the highest goal.

Yudhishtira fully agreed with this thought of Arjuna. "You must see," he said to him, "that it is Time who fastens the fetters, and Time who loosens the bond." And his brothers, understanding the allusion, could utter only the one word, "Time! Time!" The Pandavas and Draupadi, being thus entirely at one in the decision that the empire was over for them, the question of the succession was quickly arranged. The entreaties of citizens and subjects were overruled; successors and a protector installed in different



capitals; and farewell was taken of the kingdom. Having thus done their duty as sovereigns, Yudhishtira and his brothers, with Draupadi, turned to the performance of personal religious rites. Donning coverings of birch bark only, they fasted many days and received the blessings of the priests. Then each took the fire from his domestic altar—that fire which had been lighted for him on his marriage, and kept alight, worshipped, and tended ever since by his wife and himself in person—and threw it into consecrated water. This was the last act of their lives in the world, and as it was performed, and the brothers turned themselves to the east, all the women in the assembled court burst into tears. But for the great happiness which shone now in their faces, it would have seemed to all as if the Pandavas were once more leaving Hastinapura poor, and defeated at dice, for their exile in the forest. Followed for some distance by a crowd of citizens, and by the ladies of the royal household, the little procession went forward—none, however, daring to address the King, or to plead with him for a possible return. After a time, the citizens went back, and those members of the Pandava family who were to be left behind, ranged themselves about their new king as a centre. Those of the royal consorts who were daughters of reigning houses, set forth, accompanied by travelling escorts, for their fathers' kingdoms. Those who were related to the succeeding sovereign took their places behind him; and so, receiving farewells and benisons from all, Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, looked their last on the world they were leaving, and went onward, followed by Draupadi. But Yudhishtira was in fact the head of a party of seven; for hard upon their footsteps followed a dog, whose affection for them all was so great that he would not desert them.

Long was the journey and arduous, and it was made barefooted, and clad in simple birch bark, by these who had but yesterday had at their command all the resources of earth. It was their intention to practise the life of renuncia-

tion in the mountains of the far north, but first they would worship the land that they were leaving, by travelling round it in a ceremonial circle. Nothing had they left, save their garments of birch bark. Only Arjuna, reluctant to part from them, carried his mighty bow Gandiva, and his two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. Thus many days passed. Suddenly, as the little procession of pilgrims-reached the shores of the great sea that lies on the east, they found their road barred by one whose presence was like unto a veritable mountain. Closing the way before them stood the God Agni, Divinity of the Seven Flames, and the Pandavas waited with folded hands to receive his commands.

“From Ocean brought I Gandiva, O Arjuna,” said the Devourer of Forests, “to thine aid. To Ocean again, then, let thy weapons be here restored. Along with the discus of Krishna, let Gandiva vanish from the world. But know that when his hour shall again strike, he of his own accord will come once more into thine hand!” Thus adjured, and urged also by his brothers, Arjuna came forward, and standing on the shore, hurled into the sea with his own hands his priceless bow Gandiva, and his two inexhaustible quivers. And the God of Fire, satisfied with this supreme renunciation, disappeared from before them.

On and on went the pilgrims, until the circle of their worship was complete. From the salt sea, they proceeded south-west. Then they turned north, and passing Dwaraka, the city beloved of Krishna, they saw it covered by the waters of the ocean. For even so had it been prophesied, that all the things they had known should pass away, like a dream. At last they reached the Himalayas, home of meditating souls. Here were the great forests, and here the mighty snow-peaked mountains, where the mind could be stilled and quieted, and centred on itself. And beyond, in the dim north, lay Meru, Mountain of the Gods. And here it was, as they journeyed on, with faces set ever to the goal, that all the errors, of all their lives, took shape and bore fruit. They had been but small, these sins of the Pandavas—

a thought of vanity here, a vain boast, unfulfilled, there! Yet small as they were, they had been sufficient to flaw those lives that without them would have been all-perfect, and one by one the heroic pilgrims turned faint with a mortal faintness, and stopped, and fell. Only in the clear mind of Yudhishtira—"the King of Justice and Righteousness," as his subjects had loved to call him—in that clear mind, with its trained sense of human conduct, rose knowledge of its cause, with each disaster that befell.

Even he himself, it is said, could not altogether escape the common lot of imperfection, and as he felt the very pang of death shoot through one foot where it touched the earth, he remembered a shadow that had fallen once, upon his own unstained truth.

But with him there could be no rebellion against the right. He shed no tear, and uttered no sigh. Rather did his own purpose shine clearer and stronger before him, at each defeat of his little party. And thus Yudhishtira, not even looking back, proceeded alone, followed by the dog.

Suddenly there was a deafening peal of thunder, so overwhelming that the two stood still on the mountainside. Then came towards them, as it were, a cloud of light, and when this had become clear, the hero beheld in the midst of it Indra, the God of Heaven, standing in his chariot.

"It is ordained, thou chief of the race of Bharata, that thou shalt enter the realm of Heaven, in this thy human form. Wherefore do thou herewith ascend this chariot," said the god.

"Nay, Lord of a thousand Deities!" answered the King, "my brothers have all fallen dead, and without them at my side, I have no desire to enter Heaven. Nor could any one of us, indeed, accept felicity, if the delicate Draupadi, our Queen, were banished to regions of hardship. Let all therefore go in with me."

"But thou shalt behold them all when thou reachest the abodes of blessedness," said the god. "Verily they have but ascended there before thee. Wherefore yield thee not to

grief, O Chief of the Bharatas! But rise with me in this thy mortal form."

The King bowed his head in acceptance of the invitation, and stood aside to let the dog go first into the chariot.

But Indra intervened: "Today, O King, thou hast won immortality! Happiness and victory and a throne like unto my own, are thine. But send away this dog! Enjoy what thou hast achieved!"

"How difficult is it to an Aryan," said Yudhishtira, "to do a deed unworthy of an Aryan! How could I enjoy that prosperity for which I had cast off one who was devoted?"

Said Indra, "For men with dogs there is no place in Heaven. Thou art the Just! Abandon thou this dog! In doing this will be no cruelty."

But Yudhishtira answered slowly, "Nay, great Indra, to abandon one who has loved us is infinitely sinful. Never till my life ends shall I give up the terrified, nor one who has shown me devotion, nor those who have sought my protection or my mercy, nor any who is too weak to protect himself. Never have I done this. Never shall I stoop to do it. Therefore do I refuse, out of mere desire for my own happiness, to abandon this dog!"

In the King's voice there was no possibility of reconsideration. Yudhishtira had made up his mind. He would not be moved.

Yet still the Deity argued with him: "By the presence of a dog, Heaven itself would be made unholy! Thou knowest that his mere glance would take away from the consecrated all its sacredness. Wherefore, O King, art thou then so foolish? Thou hast renounced thine own brothers and Draupadi! Why shouldst thou not renounce this dog?"

"It is well known," replied Yudhishtira, "that one cannot but renounce the dead! For them there are neither enemies nor friends. I did not abandon my brothers and Draupadi so long as they were alive! I only left them, when I was unable to revive them. Not even the frightening of one who had sought our protection, nor the slaying of a woman, nor



stealing from a Brahmin, nor treachery to a friend, would now appear to me a greater sin than to leave this dog!" And lo, as he finished speaking, the dog vanished, and in his place was the radiant presence of Dharma, the God of Righteousness. "Hail, O Yudhishtira!" said he, "thou who hast renounced the very chariot of the celestials on behalf of a dog! Verily, in Heaven is none equal unto thee! Regions of inexhaustible happiness are thine!"

Then, surrounded by the chariots of the gods, Yudhishtira the Just, the King of Righteousness, seated on the car of glory, ascended into Heaven in his mortal form. And entering, he was met by all the immortals, eager to welcome him to their midst, eager to praise him as he deserved. But Yudhishtira, looking round and seeing nowhere his brothers or Draupadi, said only, "Happy or unhappy, whatever be the region that is now my brothers', to that, and nowhere else, do I desire to go!" "But why," remonstrated Indra, "dost thou still cherish human affections? Thy brothers also are happy, each in his own place. Verily, I see that thou art but mortal. Human love still binds thee. Look, this is Heaven! Behold around thee those who have attained to the regions of the gods!"

But Yudhishtira answered, "Nay, Conqueror of the Demons! I cannot dwell apart from them. Wherever they have gone, thither, and not elsewhere, will I also go!"

At this very moment the King's eyes, sweeping Heaven again, in his first eager search for those he loved, caught sight, first of Duryodhana, then of his foe's brothers, and finally of the whole hundred and one sons of Dhritarashtra, blazing like the sun, wearing all the signs of glory that belong to heroes, and seated on thrones like gods. At this sight, Yudhishtira was filled with rage. "I will not," he shouted in anger, "dwell even in the regions of happiness with the vain and reckless Duryodhana! For him were our friends and kinsmen slaughtered. By him was the Queen insulted. Listen to me, ye gods! I will not even look upon

such as these. Let me go there, whither my brothers are gone!"

"But, Great King," said one of those about him, smiling at his fury, "this should not be. In Heaven do all feuds cease. By pouring himself, like an oblation, on the fire of battle, by remaining unterrified in moments of great terror, has Duryodhana attained to celestial joys. Do thou forget thy woes. This is Heaven, O Lord of men! Here there can be no enmity!"

"If such as he could have deserved this," answered Yudhishtira, no whit appeased, "what must not my friends and kindred have deserved! Let me go to the company of the righteous! What are the celestial regions to me without my brothers? Where they are, must in itself be Heaven. This place, in my opinion, is not so."

Seeing the King so determined, the gods turned and gave orders to the celestial messenger, saying, "Do thou show unto Yudhishtira his friends and kinsmen," and, turning his face away from the regions of blessedness, yet keeping still in the world of the gods, the divine guide made to do their bidding, and went forward, followed by the King.

Dread and terrible was that road by which they now journeyed. Dark and polluted and difficult, it was noisome with foul odours, infested with stinging insects, and made dangerous and fearful by roaming beasts of prey. It was skirted on either side by a running fire. In its strange twilight could be seen sights of a nameless terror. Here and there lay human bones. It seemed to be full of evil spirits, and to abound in inaccessible fastnesses and labyrinthine paths.

On went the messenger of the gods, and on behind him followed the King, his mind every moment sinking deeper and deeper into thoughts of anguish. At last they reached a gloomy region, where was a river, whose waters appeared to boil, foaming, and throwing up clouds of vapour. The leaves of the trees, moreover, were sharp like swords. Here also were deserts of fine sand, luminous to the sight and

heated to white heat. The very rocks and stones were made of iron. There were terrible thorns also, and innumerable cauldrons filled with boiling oil. In such forms did they behold the tortures which are inflicted upon sinful men.

Seeing this region of night, abounding thus in horror, Yudhishtira said to his guide, "How much further must we travel along paths like these? What world of the gods is this? I command thee at once to disclose to me where my brothers are!"

The messenger stopped. "Thus far, O King, is your way! It was the command of the denizens of Heaven that, having come to this point, I was to return. As for yourself, if you, O Yudhishtira the Just, should be weary, you have the right of return with me!"

Stupefied by noxious vapours, and with his mind sunk in heaviness, the King turned round, and took a few steps backwards. As he did so, however, moaning voices and sobs broke out in the thick darkness about him. "Stay! stay!" sighed the voices. "Our pain is lessened by the presence of Yudhishtira. A sweet breeze, and glimpse of light, come with thee. O King, leave us not this instant!"

"Alas! alas!" said Yudhishtira in his compassion, and immediately stood still amongst these souls in Hell. As he listened, however, the voices appeared to be strangely familiar. "Who are you? Who are you?" he exclaimed to one and another, as he heard them, and great beads of sweat stood on his brow as their unbodied groans shaped themselves out of the darkness into answers, "Arjuna! Draupadi! Karna!" and the rest.

A moment passed. "Duryodhana in Heaven!" he pondered, "and these my kinsmen fallen into Hell! Do I wake, or dream? Or is all this some disorder of brain? What justice can there be in the Universe? Nay, for this crime shall I abandon the very gods themselves!" At these words, uttered within himself by his own mind, the wrath of an all-powerful monarch awoke in the heart of Yudhishtira. "Go!" he thundered in anger, turning himself to his guide. "Return

thou to the presence of those whose messenger thou art, and make known to them that I return not to their side. Here, where my brothers suffer, here, where my presence aids them, here and no other where, do I eternally abide!"

The messenger bowed his head, and passed swiftly out of sight. Up to high Heaven passed he, carrying this defiance of Yudhishthira, to Indra, Chief of Gods and Men. And the King stood alone in Hell, brooding over the unspeakable sufferings of his kinsfolk.

Not more than a moment had passed, when a cool and fragrant breeze began to blow. Light dawned. All the repulsive sights disappeared. The boulders of iron, the cauldrons of oil, and the thorny plants vanished from sight. And Yudhishthira, raising his eyes, saw himself surrounded by the gods.

"These illusions," said they, "are ended. Ascend thou to thine own place! Hell must indeed be seen by every king. Happy are they whose good deeds have been so many that they first suffer and afterwards enjoy. To thee and to these thy kindred, Yudhishthira, has Hell been shown only by a kind of mirage. Come, then, thou royal sage, behold here the heavenly Ganges. Plunge thou into this Milky Way, and casting off there thy human body, divest thyself with it of all thine enmity and grief. Then rise, O thou of never-dying glory! to join thy kinsmen and friends and Draupadi, in those blessed regions wherein they already dwell, great even as Indra, enthroned in Heaven!"



## KING PARIKSHIT AND THE FROG MAIDEN

ONCE upon a time there reigned over the city of Ayodhya a king of royal race, named Parikshit. And Parikshit on a certain day, being out hunting and pursuing a deer, outstripped all his companions and wandered alone in a dense dark forest, far away from human habitations. Now the king was both weary and a-hungered, and seeing the cool shadows, and catching sight of a beautiful pool, he pushed forward and plunged in, with the idea of bathing and resting. And when both he and his horse were cool and refreshed, he gathered lotus leaves and stems and placed them before the animal, and he himself lay down on the short grass beneath the trees.

As he lay there, between sleeping and waking, he heard the sound of a sweet voice singing. In his astonishment he sat up, to see who could be in his neighbourhood, for nowhere had he seen the footprints of men, nor had he supposed that he was near human dwellings. As he watched he saw, through the bushes, a maiden gathering flowers, and she was of a surpassing loveliness and sang as she plucked. Presently, in her quest of flowers, she drew unwittingly near the king, and he held his breath with sheer delight at the beauty of her voice and features.

At last he resolved to speak. "Blessed one," he said gently, "who art thou? and whose?"

"Whose?" said the girl, with a start, "I? I belong to none. I am unwed."

"Unwed?" said the king, "oh do then, I pray thee, grant thyself to me!"

"If I did," said the maiden slowly and pensively, "If I did, I should require a promise—!"

"What promise couldst thou ask," cried the enamoured king, "that I could not grant? Speak! What is it?"

"If I am to marry thee," said the damsel mysteriously,

"thou must give me a pledge that never wouldst thou ask me to look upon water. Unless I had this promise, I could not wed." And as she spoke she cast upon the king a look of such more than mortal sweetness that he felt as if he would swoon away.

"Dear heart," cried Parikshit, "what a little thing were this to stand between us! From the moment that thou art mine, I promise thee never to ask thee to cast thine eyes on water."

And the maiden, hearing this, bowed her head, and they exchanged tokens of marriage, and hand in hand sat down on the grass together in silence. And as they remained thus, the king's friends and escort came up, having searched for and followed him. And finding him thus in the company of a newly-affianced bride, a state carriage was brought, and the two entered it, and were driven back to the capital together.

Now from this time forward, it was as if some strange enchantment had been woven about the king. He was always in the private apartments with his newly-wedded queen. And instead of his absorption in her growing less, it seemed to become stronger and stronger, till none could obtain access to him, and the royal ministers were refused audience.

When this was on the verge of becoming a public scandal, the chief minister sent for one of the waiting-women about the palace, and questioned her closely concerning the nature of her who had so infatuated their sovereign. And the maid said: "Her beauty is undeniable and unsurpassed. In charm and loveliness she is without a peer. But one thing about her is very strange. The king was able to marry her only after promising that he would never show her water."

Now when the prime minister heard this he went away and caused a royal park to be laid out, well-planted with trees that were laden with flowers and fruit. And in a hidden place within the park he dug a beautiful bathing-pool, filled with water that was sweet as nectar, and well covered with a net of pearls. And when it was finished he came privately one day to the monarch and said, "Here is a delightful forest

without water. Let it be used for the royal pleasure." And, hearing this, the king and his adored queen went out into the park and wandered about its lawns and glades. And at last, being tired and spent, and not altogether free from hunger and thirst, the king caught sight of a charming bower, all festooned with the white and fragrant bells of creeping plants.

"Come, beloved!" he said to the queen, "here is an arbour that was made for rest. Let us enter." And they entered.

But when he was within, the king saw that the bower only covered the bathing-stairs of a bathing pool, which was shaded by some sort of roof that looked like cobweb, and being unspeakably attracted by all the surroundings and the sparkling coolness of the waters, he turned to his wife and said gently, "Surely no harm would happen to you if you bathed here! Would you not like to do so?"

Scarcely were the words uttered than the queen stepped merrily to the water-side and took a plunge. The waters closed over her as she dived; and Parikshit waited, half doubtfully, for her return. Alas, it was in vain. She did not reappear. The wife he adored was lost to him, it seemed, for ever.

Mad with anxiety, the king ran hither and thither, searching for his beloved. Nowhere could he recover any trace of her. He had the lake dragged, but even her body was not to be found. Then he ordered that the waters should be baled out. But when this had been done, nothing was discovered, save a large frog sitting beside a hole.

At this sight the king leapt to the conclusion that his wife had been devoured by frogs, and his wrath against the whole race was without bounds. Wherefore he promulgated an order that throughout his dominions they were to be slain, and that no one was to appear before him without a tribute of dead frogs.

Soon in the world of frogs this state of things became evident. Not one of them could appear above ground with-

out the fear of instant death. And the whole tribe was afflicted with unspeakable terror. In their extremity they went in embassy, with the story of their wrongs, to their own king, and he in the guise of a begging friar appeared before the throne of Parikshit, and urged him in the name of religious gentleness and mercy to rescind his cruel order for the destruction of the poor frogs. But Parikshit, with his whole soul filled with woe for the death of her who was so dear to him, replied only with renewed protestations of anger and revenge. Had the frogs, he said, not swallowed up one who was to him as the heart of his heart? Why then should he ever forgive them? Rather than do so he would continue to slay them with a continually renewed fury. It was surely very far from fitting that a learned man should intercede on their behalf.

As the monarch spoke of the loss he had suffered the seeming beggar before him looked pained and startled. It was clear that he suddenly understood the situation. "Alas, alas!" he said, "thou art under a fascination, O king! Look upon me. I am Ayu, the king of the frogs, and she who was thy wife is my daughter Sushobhana. She has cast a glamour over thee, who art of the race of men and not of our kindred. She hath indeed the power to cast enchantments. By this her conduct I am deeply grieved!"

But when Parikshit heard that he had before him the father of his beloved he said only, "Oh sir, if she is thy daughter, then bestow her upon me! I desire nothing save her return."

Then the king of the frogs, standing before Parikshit, summoned his daughter, and when she appeared before him he joined her hand to that of the monarch, saying, "Serve and wait upon thy lord!" And Parikshit, feeling out of his great love for his wife that in her restoration he had obtained as it were the sovereignty of the three worlds, bowed down before the king of the frogs, and did him reverence in due form, as the father of his beloved, and with voice choked by joy and tears, said, "Oh how fortunate I am! How fortunate



I am!" And the King of the Frogs, taking leave of his daughter, left them, and returned to that place from which he had come.

Now the King of the Frogs had parted from his daughter in sorrow and grave disapproval of the spell originally cast by her, whereby the innocent king and all her own people suffered so deeply; and in the moment of farewell, as is the wont of fathers, he had looked into the future, and instead of blessing her, had sternly said, "The fruit of the enchantment that thou so wrongfully hast practised will be seen as a flaw in the kingly honour of thy children, until the magic spell shall be redeemed." This, then, was the doom that hung over the dynasty of Parikshit and the frog-maiden, till it should be redeemed. And they lived happily together, and had three sons, whose names were Sala, Dala, and Vala. And in fullness of time King Parikshit gave up the world, and, placing his eldest son upon his throne, himself retired into the forest.

Now it happened that Sala, the new king, while out hunting one day, saw a very fleet deer, and urged his charioteer to drive quickly that he might catch it.

But the charioteer answered, "It is impossible. Only a pair of Vami horses could have enabled us to overtake that deer!" Now these Vami horses of which he spoke belonged to Vamadeva, a great Brahmin scholar, who lived in the Ashrama beside the Ganges.

And when the king heard of them he became possessed of a desire to be driven by them, and, going to the Ashrama of Vamadeva, he begged that he would lend them to him that he might capture a fleet deer. And the holy man consented to the king's using them, but exacted a promise that they should be returned immediately. Alas, the Vami horses proved so excellent that the king coveted them, and forgot his promise, but kept them when his business of hunting was over and locked them up in secret stables attached to his palace!

Now when Vamadeva saw that his horses were not return-

ed he became very sorrowful, for he felt that the king's plighted word could not be trusted. After waiting for a month, he sent a disciple to the sovereign to receive from him the Vami steeds. But the king told the young man that these horses were fit only for the use of kings, and that he could not understand why holy men and scholars should expect to possess them. So the disciple had to return to his master without the horses.

Then Vamadeva himself appeared before the monarch and pleaded with him to render back his property, which he had promised, moreover, to return when his need should be over.

But the king was obdurate, being unable, by reason of the blemish on his birth, to perceive in their fulness the obligations of the royal honour. He offered the Rishi anything out of his own stables that he might choose to take; he undertook to appoint Vamadeva the chief priest of the kingdom; he promised anything and everything, only he would not give back to their rightful owner the horses he coveted.

Then Vamadeva called upon four terrible demons to appear and slay the impious king, and even as he was speaking they arose suddenly, armed with lances, and, advancing from the four quarters, felled him to the earth. Thus died Sala the king, and Dala his brother reigned in his stead.

Now as soon as there was a convenient time, Vamadeva came before the new king and asked that the pair of Vami horses now in the royal stables should be bestowed upon him. But Dala, instead of answering, turned to his charioteer and ordered him to bring one of his finest arrows, tempered with poison, that he might kill Vamadeva. But when he raised his arm to point the arrow the Brahmin said quietly, "Thou are not aiming at me, O king! Rather is thine arrow pointed against thine own son, Senajit; him art thou about to slay."

As the words were spoken the king let fly his terrible arrow, and at the selfsame moment, in the innermost apart-

ments of the palace, the child Senajit fell, pierced by the arrow from his father's hand.

Suddenly the wail of mourning was heard, and a panic-stricken messenger arrived to give the king the news of the disaster to his line. But the death of his son seemed only to drive Dala to a frenzy of anger. Demanding another arrow, he called upon gods and men, his own subjects and the denizens of the heaven, to be witnesses of the death he was about to deal; and again he raised his arm to take the fatal aim. . . .

To the amazement of all present, except the Brahmin, who stood as he was, with eyes fixed on the sovereign, without moving—the bow was not twanged, nor was the arrow shot forth. A look of agony passed over the king's face; his hands shook, and he stood still. At last with a groan he said, "I am defeated. I am overcome. I am unable to bring about the death of Vamadeva!" And his right hand fell nerveless to his side.

At this Vamadeva's aspect became all gentleness and kindness. "Send for thy queen, O king!" said he, "and let her touch this arrow that thou didst destine for murder. Thus mayst thou be purified from the fruit of thy sin."

And the king did as he was bidden, sending for his queen. And when she came she did reverence to the sage Vamadeva, and stretched out her hand to take the poisoned arrow. And the holy man was much touched by the nobility of her bearing and the grace of her salutation, and blessing her, he said, "O thou art without fault, ask thou of me an incomparable boon. It is mine to grant thee whatever thou shalt ask!"

And the queen answered, "I pray that my husband may be freed from his sin, and that I may be ever his helpmeet, to aid him in the growth of happiness and virtue."

"O good as thou art beautiful!" cried the delighted Rishi, "thou hast saved this royal house! With thee is the curse departed that was spoken by Ayu, the father of Sushobhana. What woman doomed, a woman hath redeemed. Rule thou,

O princess, over the hearts of these thy kinsmen, thy husband and thy son, and over this great kingdom of Ayodhya. Never, while they honour thee, shall there be loss of kingly honour in the race of Parikshit!”

And so saying, and taking back his horses, the Rishi departed from the court of Dala, the king of Ayodhya.



## RELIGION OF THE MOUNTAINS

EVERY well-born Hindu boy is taught that his ancestors have not always lived in India. The people's own name for themselves is Aryans and they believe that they came into the Peninsula from the North, across the mountain-passes of the Himalayas. Indeed, there are still a few tribes living in the Hindukush called the *Lall Kaffir*, or Fair Folk, because they are of pale complexion. The original stock of the Hindus probably have been left behind on the Southward march of their countrymen.

At any rate, the stories and present religion of the people have grown up since they crossed the mountains. In early days they had no images. Neither had they temples. They had open spaces or clearings and here they would gather in crowds to perform the Fire-Sacrifice. The fire was made of wood, borne to the spot on the back of a bull. And there were priests who recited chants and knew exactly how to pile up the logs—for this was done in geometrical patterns, very carefully arranged—and how to make the offerings. This was the business of the priest, just as it is another man's work to grow corn or to understand weaving. He was paid for it and used his money to support his wife and children.

As far as we can go back however, Hindus have always believed that if a man wanted to be *religious*, he must give his whole life up to that. A *good* man may manage a home and family and business, they say. But if a man wants to be musical he gives all his care and thought to music; if clever, to study. And is it easier to know Truth than to do these things? So you see they have a very high ideal of what being religious means. But where do you think they expect a man to go in order to become this? The musician takes his place

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Introductory pages of the story of Shiva written for the children of America in 1900. As the main story is same as 'The Story of the Great God: Shiva or Mahadeva' re-written in 1903 and included in *The Web of Indian Life* (Complete Works, Vol. II) it is not reproduced here.

before some instrument—does he not?—the piano, or the organ, or the violin. And the student goes to school or college. But to become religious, the Hindu would send a man into the forest! There he would be expected to live in a cave or under trees; to eat only the wild roots and fruits that he could find in the wood and to wear pieces of the bark of the white birch for clothing. This is a curious picture that you see now with your eyes shut, is it not? But it is not finished. You see the idea is that a great part of religion consists in quieting the mind. And being alone, without any need to think of food or clothes or home, in silence, amongst the trees and the birds, must be a great help to this. But it goes further. What would become of a man's *hair*, living far away from other men, without brushes and combs and scissors? It would grow thick and unkempt, would it not? And so great masses of hair coiled up hastily and fixed on the top of the head are amongst the best marks of religion in these forest-dwellers. They are expected to bathe constantly, even to wash the hair, but they cannot spare time from meditation to make it beautiful. Now and then we see a man like this passing along the streets of some Indian city, with his long staff in one hand crowned by three points,—like the trident of Neptune,—and a begging-bowl with a handle in the other. But the place to find such people in great number is some forest, or beside a sacred river. There, we might still see them clothed in strips of birch-bark; but in towns, though they are only passing through, they are almost sure to wear instead a piece of cotton cloth, salmonpink in colour, which has also been a sign of the religious life for thousands of years past.

There was another use of the birch-bark which gives it a peculiar interest. These old hermits, when thoughts occurred to them that *must* be written down, used it for paper! So the oldest Hindu books were made of it (instead of vellum as with us, or papyrus with the Egyptians) and to this day no prayer or text in India is counted so sacred as that which is written on this skin of the birch-tree.

Now I hope you have some notion of what the religious men of early Aryan times (the Vedic period, we call it) looked like. For I want you to imagine the great Fire-Sacrifice, with its crowds of people shouting and worshipping around it—while the priest throws the appointed offerings of oil and grain and foods into it, saying the proper texts—and one or two of these forest-saints mingling with the people to join in the devotions.

I think you can also picture the end of the ceremonies—the fire out, and only a great mound of white wood-ashes remaining, the people gone home; the place deserted, save perhaps for an old hermit who comes up to the mound, takes up a handful of ashes and rubs himself all over with them. To him, it is as if he had clothed himself with the worship of God and with separation from the world—and he goes back to his life under the trees feeling holier and happier.

And so there comes to be a kind of monks who wear this covering of ashes and a pink cloth or strip of birch-bark only.

If you saw one of these in the distance the first thing you would notice would be his whiteness. Take wood-ashes from the hearth sometimes when you have a chance, and rub them over one hand and arm. Then you will see that it is not true that there are black men and white men in the world. There are yellow and pink and brown, of different degrees, but a *white* human skin you had never seen till you tried these ashes. Do you see what the next idea of the people was? That perfect holiness and this whiteness would always go together.

Now where were they wandering at this time? Through the Himalayas. And what would often be in sight? The snowpeaks. And of what would the snowpeaks remind them, I wonder!

Have you noticed how a baby thinks that everything is human? How he talks about tables and chairs being “good” or “naughty,” about trees laughing and clapping their hands,

about stones watching him, shells talking and toy birds and animals walking about? This tendency to see a human being in everything is called the instinct of *Personification* and people and nations who love beautiful things have it very strongly. The ancient Greeks never made a picture of the sea; where that ought to be they put an old king with a three-pronged staff, called Neptune, and that meant the sea to them. For Neptune was the God of Ocean. In the same way for the city of Athens they had Athene; for the time of harvest, the goddess Demeter, and so on. And each of these figures had special symbols always with it, as the trident of Neptune, the shield and helmet of Athene, the torch of Demeter. And the people had long stories to tell about the reason for drawing and carving them just so.

Now the very self-same thing happened in India (and to a less extent in old Norway and amongst the red men of America). The people could not help making mountains and rivers and stars into spirits, with these things for bodies, and calling them gods.

So the Ganges became a great mother, and the Sun, the kind and loving god Vishnu, while even hills and plants had each an indwelling soul, with a character and will of his own.

In their early home, in the North, they had had a set of gods,—Indra for the sky, Agni for fire, Varuna for water, and others,—but here in the new land, these began to be forgotten, became old-fashioned so to speak. And the inspiration of the place filled the dreams of the people more and more. The Aryans fell in love with India and became Hindus.

And what was their thought about the snow-mountains?

Why, it seemed to them that *they* told about the fire-worship and the fire about them! Were not the flames of the sacrifice white like the Himalayas, always mounting upwards like the aspiring peaks, leaving behind them ashes for eternal frost?

Those snowy heights became the central objects of their love. Look at them. Lifted above the world in silence, terri-



ble in their cold and their distance, yet beautiful beyond all words, what are they like? Why, they are like—a great monk, clothed in ashes, lost in meditation, silent and alone! They are like,—like,—the Great God Himself, Shiva, Mahadeva!



# RELIGION AND DHARMA





## RELIGION AND DHARMA

EVERY religion centres round some particular idea: Ancient Egypt round death; Persia round the mystery of Good and Evil; Christianity round the redeeming love of a divine Incarnation. Only Hinduism aims at the heights of Vairagyam and Mukti, and at nothing secular. This is indeed the weak point of Hinduism, as the Swami Vivekananda so often said. "Only renunciation and Mukti in this shop! Nothing for the householder!" was his half-jocular way of referring to the want he felt so keenly. The quality by which Hinduism has it in her power to make up for this defect of her greatness, is her capacity for synthetising every religious idea with which she comes in contact. The absorptive power of Hinduism as a religion, coupled with its resistant power as a civilization, furnishes one of the most startling paradoxes in the history of man. Derived originally from a veritable network of religions, in which the co-ordinating element was the philosophy now known as Vedanta, it has thrown out reforming sects in the Mohammedan period, and thrown out reforming sects in the Christian period, each of these being in fact the expression of its admiration for the new ideal of which it has caught a glimpse.

Today, however, Hindus see that the 'greatest call upon the religious instincts of the country lies in the need of assimilating whole new areas of life. We must make possible the

“short views” of the Christians. There must be some religious teaching and encouragement for those who only want heaven, not Mukti. There must be a recognition of *righteousness*, as well as of holiness. Righteousness lies in duty done: holiness requires renunciation. A thousand good citizens are necessary, as the background of one great Sannyasin. There must then be a philosophy of citizenship, as well as of Sannyasa.

And in truth the exaltation of one thing does not demand the decrying of its fellow. The ideal is always infinite, always divine. A highly moralized society produces the greatest saints. The purity of fathers and mothers makes possible the birth of Avatars. Where marriage is faithfully kept, there sincere Sannyasa is possible, not amongst profligates and riotous livers. Similarly, the presence of honourable citizens is necessary to the maintenance of a grand religious ideal, and the citizen is as necessary to its manifestation as the monk.

But if this is so, we have to search our ancient scriptures with a new aim. We must seek for all that can support and encourage us in doing manfully the work of this present world. Renunciation can be achieved through duty quite as well as by the abandonment of duty. We have thousands of texts to tell us so, but the prevailing preconception in favour of Sannyasa has led to our ignoring all that favours Dharma. The weak point of European society lies in the absence of the monastic ideal. True. But equally sure is it that the weak point of Hinduism is the want of emphasis on the ideal of the householder and the citizen. The reason lies largely in the fact that when our texts were formulated our society was as rich in virtue as in material resources. When the last of these deserts us, it is difficult to prevent the decay of the former; and what is wanted today is a deliberate recapture of both.

For this, we must exalt work. We must look upon the world as a school, in which it is worth while to strive for promotion from class to class. We must set our shoulder to the wheel and struggle unceasingly to attain the end we



Sister Nivedita in Her Study





Mayavati Advaita Ashrama  
Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Sevier, Sister Christine, Mrs. Abala Bose



have set before ourselves. Our philosophy tells us that absolute progress is impossible in the things of this life. But relative progress is fully possible; and while we move on this plane of relativity, we must work as if perfection would reward the very next step.

Let us set before ourselves the master-ideals, even in things relative. "I do not make good screws, sir, I make the best that can be made," said an indignant workman in reply to too casual an inquiry. This ought to be our attitude. We must make the best screws that can possibly be made. In every direction it must be the same. The best not too good, the highest not too difficult, for us to attain. Nothing less than the utmost. Nothing easy. Nothing cheap. The same energy that might have made an ascetic will also make a workman, if that will better serve the Mother's purpose.

And let our ideals be higher for our friends also. Let no man consort with mean company. Monk or citizen, let a man be noble. Whether Brahmin or pariah, let him practise self-respect, and demand the like from others. We help no one by being so passive as to convert him into a brute!

In the school, the lessons are graduated, but all alike are EDUCATION. All are equally the concern of the school-authorities. Even so with our civilization. The integrity of the man of business is to the full as acceptable an offering as the renunciation of the monk, for unless there be honest men of the world, the religious orders must come to an end.

Thus Hinduism, fully recognising the need of the practical and secular life, and drawing from within herself the stores that are necessary for its development and growth, synthesises once more ideals that seemed opposite. The super-social life is seen in its true relation to society. The goal is preached as attainable, not only by the sadhu in the forest, but also by the butcher in the town and the wife in the home.

## MUKTI: FREEDOM

OF all the questions that a wakeful and fresh intellect will constantly ask, there is none, perhaps, more sure to recur than, What is Freedom? Many of us are born struggling for actual freedom, for our own freedom. All of us are born to struggle for something. Nothing more terrible could be imagined than a human being put into circumstances so artificial that all motive for struggle was eliminated, and he was deprived of the natural human right of something to desire and strive for. We can imagine a man in prison for life realising such hopelessness, though, if so, it must be because his whole conception of activity is social or muscular, and therefore can be thwarted. Or a cage made of riches, or rank,—such a cage as that of royal birth, for instance,—might produce this effect on a nature too good to lose itself in fleshly delights, and too stupid to find paths of self-development. But if so, the man who never struggled would grow up an idiot. That at least is certain. All our vivacity, all our intelligence, is developed by struggle. Only shapeless incapacity could result from its lack.

It has been said that the great may be distinguished from the little by whether or not they are struggling for freedom. This may be true. For there is no doubt that we may struggle for, and even realise, a thing which we could not possibly define intellectually. Most of us win our own freedom in this thing and that thing, and thus gradually build up a more or less perfect freedom. Many struggle for freedom under the name of the Right. “God and my Right”—*Dieu et mon droit*—is a formula that refers to some such contest of the soul. It is only Hinduism that has been subtle enough to recognise that beyond the thing itself which seems to be the object of our strife, the real thirst of the soul is for *freedom*—and that this freedom is the essential condition of self-development. The man who is free, says Dharma, is the only

man who is himself. The man who is really and fully himself is free—free in all directions, free of all bonds.

One essential characteristic of freedom is that it has always to be realised in opposition to something. The struggle of every individuality—whether a simple or a compound—is to define itself, by attaining self-direction, by repudiating the control of its fellow-organisms. Freedom from the pressure of his social surroundings is an absolute necessity of manly men. The manly man may choose to act precisely as his society would desire, but he must believe that he does this because he himself chooses, and not because society compels. And yet any great anxiety on this point is crude enough, since manly men are too accustomed to their own freedom, and their own power of defending their freedom, to be uneasy about it, or suspicious of invasions upon it. It is only a child, who has never yet felt himself grown-up, who finds it necessary to refuse whatever is asked of him, in order that he may hug to himself his own liberty of refusal. And here we note the vanity, the selfishness, the pre-occupation with self, and indifference to the needs of others, that make such natures, at such a stage, unfit for high and arduous forms of co-operation. The really great are born with such assurance of their own freedom to withhold, that they are full of eagerness to *give*, and welcome every opportunity of serving as a privilege. Such natures we see every day. Unselfishness is not rare amongst human beings. On the contrary, it is the mortar that joins the bricks of the whole edifice.

Society, then, is one of the forces against which the individual has to realise his own freedom—one of the powers from which he has to wrest it. But the question again occurs, what is that freedom for which the individual is struggling? And here arises one of the supreme fallacies. Some take it that freedom is identified with slavery to their own impulses. This is the freedom that makes drunkards, gluttons, and libertines.

At first, all our activity, all our development of faculty, depends upon desire: afterwards, desire is seen as a form

of disease, of which we must be cured! Is this the truth? The momentum of desire, that impels us to yield inevitably to our own caprices, is not freedom. It is the last and subtlest form of bondage, the more dangerous and deadly for the fact that we are liable to mistake its nature. Liberty to realise what is our own will may be an essential condition of freedom, but until we are as free from that will, and the desires suggested by that body and mind, as from those of all the other hundreds of millions of human beings, we do not know what real freedom is.

How large, how calm, how full of exquisite joy and graciousness, never dimmed, is the heritage of life that awaits the individual in those elysian fields of the soul, where this freedom has been won! It may be manifested in any way, by any means. For only the free can apprehend what freedom is. Only the free can determine how freedom shall be shown. Only the actions of the free are potent, unhampered by feebleness of their own or aggression of others—free! free! Freedom is indeed the supreme good of the soul. So far from being “a night in which all cows are black,” it is, as every Hindu knows, the perfect access of daylight, neither too much nor too little, into every nook and cranny of our universe. But even so, when we seek to define it, we are met by an eternal impossibility, and can only ejaculate “*Neti! neti!* Not this! Not this!

The soldier has to learn that obedience is his form of prayer. To be doing Japam when one ought to be resting, and consequently to be sleepy when one ought to be at work, is not a meritorious condition. No Punya that way! The sunny-heartedness of the child, on the other hand, ready to forget all about its mother, if its mother tells it to run away and play, is true Bhakti, and better than many Pranams.

What a wonderful discovery was that of the Swami Vivekananda, that *manliness* may often prove to be the whole of piety! Some races have practised such virtue out of sheer instinct, but never before was a survey of life so comprehensive, so far-reaching, added to the treasury of



authoritative pronouncements on religious truth. This manliness-which-is-righteousness involves, it will be noticed, a kind of Mukti, for the manly man has no time to be conscious of his own manliness. Heroism in great moments is the natural blossom of a life that in its little moments is fine and fearless.

“Do the work that’s nearest,  
Though it’s dull at whiles,  
Helping when you meet them,  
Lame dogs over stiles.”

is not a bad rule of life for the simple and the brave.

## THE GREATER RITUAL

So far from remaining unchanged, a religion that is alive must be always growing. Only the dead can be petrified in rigid forms. The living must be constantly assimilating new forces, new materials, responding in fresh ways to unprecedented stimuli, tending in some degree to remake the very environment that is re-moulding itself.

Even of the Sanatana Dharma this is true. Hinduism would not be eternal, were it not constantly growing and spreading, and taking in new areas of experience. Precisely because it has this power of self-addition and re-adaptation, in greater degree than any other religion that the world has even seen, we believe it to be the one immortal faith, the great tree-stem, bearing on itself, as outlying branches, all the more fugitive creeds of the world.

It is necessary, however, to know in what direction to look for changes, if we would be intelligent about recognising these when they come. Like Roman Catholicism, Hinduism has gone on for the last twelve hundred years developing more and more into a religion of segregation, the culture of the soul, a secret between the worshipper and the priest, or the soul and God. Undoubtedly it has been true, in this respect, to the ultimate message of all religions. The emancipation of the soul—Spiritual Individualism, as the Swami Vivekananda called it—is the main business of organised creeds. A few social benedictions are a mere side-issue.

But religion has also a communistic side. It lifts the soul to God, but it also binds together man and man. If we are the children of the Mother, we must for that very reason be brothers of one another. A specialisation in one direction requires to be corrected by a compensating development in the other. More souls will now be emancipated by attention paid to the democratic or communistic side of worship.

For this, there will have to be common prayer. And

common prayer itself must be organised. That is to say, there must be services in which responses are required from several worshippers at once, and these responses should be in the vernacular. When Shlokas are recited by a great number all together, it will be found desirable to divide these into two sections, and let them repeat the texts in antiphon.

The religious uses of the procession must be restored. We cannot doubt when we study Buddhism,—which was, of course, only a version of an older Hinduism,—that the procession, with banners, Shanhs,\* drums, incense, and holy water, was a great feature in old Indian worship. A few of its most beautiful uses still remain, as when seven women carry torches round the bride-groom, or the sons encircle the dead father with fire.

There ought now to be an anxious scrutinizing of these old ritual observances, and of the whole subject of ritual in general. Many of our own most lovely rites are still practised in Europe, though lost to us. We must restore the greater meanings of our Hindu ceremonies. Worship is in the future to have a place for the people, as well as for the priest. There is to be co-operation and self-organisation, even in the praising of God.

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\* Conchs.

## THE CROWN OF HINDUISM

WE have heard much, lately, more or less sincere, about the Crown of Hinduism. But how many Hindus have themselves any idea of what is in fact the crown of their faith? If it really deserves all the good things said of it, it will not succumb, we may be sure, to the attacks of a foreign religion. The fact that such a fate can be foretold for it, with smiles, ought to be an indication to us of how much is meant by an empty compliment. The fact is, foreigners with all their perspicacity, cannot easily or actually distinguish between our religion and our social system, bound up as that is with a network of semi-religious sanctions. But our whole social system might conceivably disappear without in any degree affecting the most distinctive and important of our religious ideas. They are indeed as applicable to the West as to the East. Perhaps the real crown of Hinduism lies in the fact that it, almost alone amongst formulated faiths, has a section devoted to absolute and universal truths, and has no fear whatever of discriminating between these and those accidental expressions which might be confounded by the superficial with their belief itself.

In spite of its seemingly vast mythology, the actual content of Hinduism is infinitely less dependent on mythological ideas than any other religion whatsoever, not excepting Christianity. He who is driven to abandon the historicity of Western beliefs has but sorry ground henceforth to stand upon. Not so the Hindu. There is no shade of the search after truth that is not looked upon here as religious heroism. We are in no danger of persecuting a man for no better reason than that he can see farther and deeper than we! Giordano Burno would never have been burnt, Galileo would never have been put to the torture, if India had been their home and birthplace. The Sanatana Dharma sanctions and endorses every form of honest striving after knowledge. It is



jealous and suspicious of no form of truth. Perhaps in this lies the true crown of Hinduism.

Ours is the religion of a people who have never relapsed into barbarism, and have never had any quarrel with education. We do not distinguish between the sacredness of different forms of truth. Truth is truth. We are not really so seriously incommoded by our mythology as those are who call us idolatrous by theirs. We must be true to what we believe. All knowledge is sacred. In the trust that has been snatched from the abyss, it is not for us to say what is more and what less binding. Mathematics is also God's. Men of science are also Rishis.

We can afford to laugh at our foreign friends, in the fashions that sweep across their religious horizon. God really exists, the Christians are inclined to believe, because Sir Oliver Lodge says so. This is mere childishness. Do they expect others to accept a religion whose own sons do it so little justice as this? To the Hindu, religion is experience or nothing. If science is also experience, he does not feel it incumbent upon him to deny either of two things, both of which he knows to be true. Is God in his keeping? Does the universe depend upon his immediate understanding of it? If he were a criminal judge he might have to exercise more humility and patience than this!

Hinduism never tends to make men contented to read or to believe. To have a right to talk, a man must first realise. No counterfeit coin will be accepted for this. We know the difference at sound between the spurious and the real. We can tell who speaks with authority and who as the scribes. Our faith rests from first to last on a basis of experience, of realisation, of personal appropriation. Without this, a mere lip-adhesion is of no consequence in our eyes. Let it come, let it go. It does not count. Were the whole of our system of scaffolding to be swept away tomorrow, we should be able to reconstruct it all again: nay, we should be compelled to do so, out of the very wants of the human heart.

Let those who are disposed to wail by the riverside, shedding false tears over our approaching extinction, take heed lest it be not their own superstitions that are at the point of death instead of ours! Hinduism is not going to die because her sons have learnt to drink a cup of morning tea, forsooth! Caste, and occupation, and mode of living, and forms of culture might all disappear, and Hinduism remain intact as ever. In fact, is not something of the kind to be expected in the speedy spread of Hinduistic ideas to Christian lands? Our religion is fully compatible with any of the higher forms of civilization. But it will never die out of the land of its birth. If anything were needed to make this more certain, it would be just such ill-considered and premature exultation as that to which we have been alluding. Do we not know that with the passing of characteristic faiths comes the death of nations? Are we fools, that we should not know the meaning of the tale of contemporary civilizations in Ancient Egypt, and in Babylon, dead beyond power to revive, because they parted with their ancestral trust of thought? India shall not do this! Rather shall she go out into all the world, and see the inadequacy of more childish faiths met out of her own brimming store. Rather shall she become the Guru and instructor of all others, and learn to measure the greatness of her own thinkers by the littleness and shallowness of those who oppose them. Rather shall her pride and confidence in this her own treasure wax greater day by day. Smiling serenely, she will pass over her flatterers, her hypocritical sympathisers and her well-intentioned but foolish children easily elated by meaningless words, and let her own glance rest, in calm and content, on a future not far distant when the positions shall be strangely reversed.

That such a time is coming, nay, that it is close at hand, we should be strangely disloyal to our Mother-Church to doubt. We should be strangely incompetent readers of her past triumphs, if we could not see. Not the churches of the world alone, but the very universities of Europe, will yet

do homage before the names of Indian thinkers, who, living in the shelter of forest-trees, and clad in birch-bark or in loin-cloths, have formulated truths more penetrating and more comprehensive than any of which Europe herself—childishly bent on material comfort—ever dreamt.

## HINDUISM AND ORGANISATION

HINDUISM is one of the finest and most coherent growths in the world. Its disadvantages arise out of the fact that it is a growth, not an organisation; a tree, not a machine. In an age in which the whole world worships the machine, for its exactness, its calculableness, and its dirigibility, this fact, while it makes for a greater permanence, also involves a certain number of desiderata. The fruits of the tree of Hinduism are of an excellence unparalleled; but it is not easy to reach by its means those benefits that do not occur spontaneously, ends that have to be foreseen and deliberately planned and arranged for. For instance, alone amongst the world's faiths perhaps, ours has no quarrel of any sort with truth. Under its sway, the scientific mind is absolutely free to pursue to the uttermost its researches into the Infinite Nescience of things, the philosopher is encouraged to elucidate his conclusions, and simple piety does not dream of passing judgment on things admittedly too high for it. All this is true of Hinduism. At the same time, what has it done *to grasp* the highest scientific education for its children, or to impel its people forward upon the pursuit of mastery in learning or in ministering to social service?

There is nothing in Hinduism to forbid an attempt on our part to compass these things, and the only thing that could drive us to make the effort,—namely a vigilant and energetic sense of affairs, a public spirit that took account of things as a whole,—was undoubtedly indicated by the Swami Vivekananda, as part of what he meant by Aggressive Hinduism. We ought to make our faith aggressive, not only internationally, by sending out missionaries, but also socially, by self-improvement; not only doctrinally, by accepting converts, but also spiritually, by intensifying its activity. What we need is to supplement religion by public spirit,—an enlightened self-sense in which every member of the commu-



nity has a part. Class-preference is obsolete in matters of education. The career of the intellect is now for him who has the talent. By us, this principle has to be boldly and enthusiastically accepted. Even as the school is open to all, so must every form of social ministration be made. The college, the orphanage, the hospital, the women's refuge, these must be opened by such as have the devotion and energy for the task, and nothing must be said of the birth of the servant of humanity. By virtue of his consecration, he becomes a saint, even as, by his Jnanam, the philosopher makes himself a Rishi.

Activity is eased and heightened if it is socialised: that is to say, if it is the work of a body, espousing a common conviction, and not of a solitary individual, wandering the world, and divided between his idea itself and the question of its support. This common conviction, driving into work, is the reason why small religious sects are so often the source of vast movements of human amelioration. Many of these outstanding problems of Hinduism have been attacked, for instance, by the Brahmo Samaj, with considerable success. The little church forms a background and home for the worker. It sends him out to his task, rejoices over his success, and welcomes him back with laurels, or with ministration, when he turns home to die. Without some such city of the heart, it is difficult to see how the worker is to keep up his energy and courage. The praise and pleasure of our own little group of beloved ones is very sweet to all of us, and quite properly spurs us on to surmount many an obstacle that we should not otherwise attempt. Let the soul grow, by saying "not this!" "not this!" to what height it will; but let it *have* the occasion for practising this discrimination.

We must take up our problems, then, as social groups. Let no man enter on the apostolate that is to shake the world, alone. Everything done, every discovery made, even every poem written, and every dream dreamed, is a *social* achievement. Society has contributed to it, and will receive its benefits. Let the missionary, then, on whom the effort seems

to rest, not reckon himself to be the chief actor. There must be some two or three, knit together by some well-wrought bond, in every undertaking that is to benefit humanity. Perhaps they were comrades at school and college. Perhaps they are disciples of a single master. Possibly they belong to the same village. Maybe they are fellow-workmen in some common employment. Whatever be the shaping force, there must be association of aim and co-operation of effort, if there is to be success, and there must be a strong bond of love amongst those few ardent souls who form the central core.

Voluntary association, the desire of a body to take on corporate individuality, is thus the point of departure within Hinduism for civic activity. But we must not forget how much every activity owes to the general movement of society around it. Work must be done by the few as the servants, not as the enemies, of the many. Every single movement needs other counter-movements to supplement it, if it is to maintain itself in vigour. Thus, the difficulty about technical education in India is not want of funds, which have been poured in in abundance; but want of general industrial development, in the society around. There is a fixed ratio between education and development which cannot be passed, hence only by definite and alternating increments to the one and to the other can progress take place. Again, there is a fixed proportion between the total of these and the community's need of the highest scientific research, which cannot be contravened. And all these alike must find themselves inhering in an inclusive social energy, which takes account of its own needs, its own problems and its own organs. The vivifying of this general social sense is the first of all our problems. We have to awaken it to refresh it, and to keep it constantly informed. What this social sense has now first and foremost to realise, is our want of education, the need of a real ploughing of the mind. For this, high and low, we ought to be content to starve and slave and bear the utmost pinch of poverty. And not for our own sons alone. This is a matter in which the interest of all should be the interest of each one, the

necessity of one the interest of all. We have to energise our culture. We have to learn to think of things in their wholeness, and to see them from new points of view. We have to possess ourselves of all that is known by humanity, not to continue in contentment with a mere corner of its knowledge, well fenced off. Are we mentally capable of science, of sanity, of comprehensiveness? If so, we have now to prove our capacity.

And where shall we find the starting-point for this new assault on the citadel of our own ignorance? Let us find it boldly amongst religious forces. In Buddhist countries, the monastery is the centre round which are grouped schools, libraries, museums, and efforts at technical education. Why should we not, in our Southern cities expect the temple, similarly, to take the lead, in the fostering of the new and higher education? Why should we dread the Brahmin's tendency to exclusiveness and reaction? If it be really true that we are capable of sanity, is the Brahmin to remain an exception to that sanity? Let us expect of our own country and of our own people, the highest and noblest and most progressive outlook that any people in the world might take. And in doing this, let us look to become Hindus, in a true sense, for the first time. For it is a question whether so grand a word ought to be borne by us unless we have first earned and approved our right to it. Ought not the name of our country and our faith to be to us as a sort of order of merit, a guerdon of loyal love, the token of accepted toil?

## CO-OPERATION

Both Hindus and Mohammedans have great need amongst themselves of such work as has been done amongst Christians, during the past century, by mutual association. The real hold of Christian missionaries, such as it is, is due to their strength in co-operation, to form schools, hostels, and institutions of mutual aid. Considering the attractiveness of the Young Men's Christian Association, its fine buildings, its varied programmes of lectures, its reading and writing rooms, its warm social receptions for students before and after holidays, it is infinitely to the credit of the Indian youth in university-cities, that it is as much neglected as it is. For, of course it is right, when we refuse an idea, to refuse also the benefits which might accrue to us from that idea.

Nor would any one suggest that the association in question should be deliberately imitated by Orientals amongst themselves. A very different matter is the apprehension of the idea that is represented by the institution, and its re-expression in some other form. The impact of Western life and thought has shattered many of our own most precious methods of self-organisation. The old village-community,—with its coherence, its moral order, its sense of purpose, and its openness to the highest thought and sacrifice,—has gone, and in its place we have the heap of disconnected fragments that goes in modern times by the name of a city.

Even the city, of the mediaeval epoch, had its own way of fulfilling the purposes of modern voluntary associations. The newcomer to Benares or Allahabad found himself immediately in his own quarter, surrounded by men from his own part of India, directly or indirectly connected with himself. In the outer apartments of their homes he met with friends, received assistance and advice, and was able to avail himself of local culture. This Para\* of his own countrymen was to all

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\* Quarter of a city.



intents and purposes his club, his home, his hospital. And it served all these ends far better than any modern 'society' of the cities can possibly do. It was here that there grew up the organised communal opinion that resulted sooner or later in the extension of scope in required directions. For the communal organisation in all provinces was generous, and free, and debonair, full of comradeship, rising in its richer members into princely liberality. It is the continuity of our social environment, moreover, that keeps us all on our own highest level in character and conduct. And this continuity was admirably provided for in the old city 'Paras'. The youth who came from the south in those days, was not open to the same temptations as now, from the dissipations of the city. And this for the good reason that the elders about him were men of his own district. The news of any lapses from decorum would assuredly travel back to the old people at home, and in the village of his birth his family would hang their heads for shame of him. It is not easy to estimate the moral restraint imposed by this series of facts.

While we think of this, however, we cannot fail to remember the contrast which is presented by modern developments. Let us think, for instance, of the crowds of poor Mohammedans who find their way into a city like Calcutta,—chiefly perhaps from Patna and Behar,—to act as syces and coachmen. The temptations of this particular life are notorious in all countries. Liquor-shops are banefully on the increase. The custom of congregating in one's own quarter is on the wane. Can it be wondered at that the life of the city proves utterly destructive to the happiness of many a simple country home?

And yet, though all this is but too true, we must not speak as if any people in the world could compare with our own people even here. Very often the poor man whose hold on life is so sadly impaired by the foreignness of his environment, is nevertheless struggling to live on one meal a day and send half of his tiny wages to his home. No one will ever know the whole history of the self-sacrifice of Indian

servants in these days. The commonest of our countrymen are able to practise a control of hunger that in any other land would canonise them as martyrs.

We, and especially the student classes, then, who live in cities, would do well to consider the social problems that surround us. What can we do for the People? How can we strengthen the People to recover themselves? We are not called upon to create new forces of restitution. These, in abundance, are our heritage from our forefathers. But we are called upon to conserve, to use, to develop, and readjust to modern needs, the treasure of moral impulses and moralising and co-ordinating institutions that are ours.

Let each of us ask himself, where are the Shudras who have come from his father's village? Does one not know? Then how sadly one has failed in the duty of solidarity! Could one do anything to help them? Anything to share with them one's own privileges? One never knows, till one has tried, how many and how great those privileges are. What a revolution would be effected, and how quickly, in Indian ideas, if every student in the land took a vow each year to give twelve lessons to some person or group of persons who had no other means of education! Twelve lessons would not be a great tax on any one, yet how immensely helpful to the taught! The lessons might take the form of anything the teacher had to offer. Physical exercise would do, if that were all one could give. Reading and writing, or counting, would be good. But better than any of these would be talks about geography and history, or the interchange of simple scientific conceptions, or a training in the observation of the everyday facts about us.

Have we thought how the acquisition of a few ideas helps living, how an intellectual speculation, left to germinate in the mind, raises and deepens the days it colours? Knowledge is truly the bread of life. Let us hasten, with the best that is in us, to offer knowledge to all about us!

## SECTARIANISM

A great deal is commonly said of the evil done by the existence of sects. It may be, however, that such statements take somewhat too much for granted; that they are made thoughtlessly; and that the whole question of the use and abuse of sects is worthy of careful consideration.

Undoubtedly the temper that splits hairs continually over minute differences of doctrine, that welcomes dispute, and divides societies on the slightest pretext, is mischievous and reprehensible. If sectarianism of this description be the necessary characteristic of sects, then the less we see of them the better. All sects must be regarded as an evil, and hardly anything could be an excuse for their creation. But is it necessary that the schismatic temper should be the one inevitable product of a sect?

It is not the desire to separate from others, but the desire of men to unite themselves together, round the banner of a common truth or ideal, that brings the sect into being. The sect is a *church*, and a church, to quote a time-honoured definition, is neither more nor less than "a company of faithful people." In this sense, we might almost call any body of persons associating themselves voluntarily for the purposes of some scholarly study, or learned idea, a sect, or church. In a sense, a gathering of the fellows of a medical society, or an Asiatic society, is a congregation. In a sense, since these bodies are made up of persons "faithful" to a certain idea, they are 'churches'. And as soon as we say this, we realise that the sect is really an assertion of unity, not of difference; an association, not a separation; a brotherhood, not a schism.

But let us look at the religious body, the church gathered round some central idea of faith or conduct, the ecclesiastical church. Do sects of this kind play no large and generous purpose in the world, from which we may learn? Undoubted-

ly they do. In the first place, they form a confraternity, even, in a certain sense, a home. The struggling, poverty-stricken member has those about him who will aid, those whose communal interest lies in his well-being, those who will defend him from the sneers and oppression of the world without. This aspect of the sect may be seen in the Jewish, the Jain, and the Parsi communities.

The sect is also a school. The children of its members have a heritage in the idea, and their church is responsible for their education in it. They are born to a place in an army, and the ideals and discipline, as well as the solidarity, of soldiers, are theirs from the first moment of life.

The sect is an arena. Each member's life is plunged in the open, with the moral enthusiasm of all about him to be his guide and stay. The honour of the church demands the highest possible achievement of each one of its sons. She gives her hero parting salutation, and welcome on return. She treasures up every significant act of his life, and makes it available to those who live in his shadow. She provides a home and friends in the distant cities for the youth who fares forth to seek fortune and adventure. She is mother and friend and guardian, Guru and generalissimo and banner, all in one. Is a sect altogether an evil?

Yet the final use of the sect is the transcending of sects. Its greatest sin is to deny the truth to those without. Every moment of our lives is Judgment-Day. Even at their culmination, when the part has been played with honour in the sight of all men, there is the question as to the spirit in which the whole shall be summed up. Shall we end by claiming the sole infallibility for ourselves? Or shall our final message be "Lo, this is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"?

In India—the land from which the words just quoted surely emanated—there can be no doubt as to which of these is the true attitude. No one church has a monopoly of truth. No single shepherd is alone infallible. There is no final sect except Humanity, and that Humanity must include, as



Buddha thought, all that lives and enshrines a soul.

The day may perhaps have gone by for the forming of sects, but not for taking their spirit and inspiring our own lives with it. As the church is a school, a home, a brotherhood, so let every village be, amongst us. As the sect is a great over-arching Motherhood, so be to us our country and our fellows. The religious band gathered round a common truth. But we are called together by the sacredness of our *place*. The ancient Aryan planted his altar, and lighted the sacred fire when he came to the spot that seemed to him most sacred. And so to us, every common hearth-place is the Vedic altar. The household, the village, the city, and the country, are they not so many different forth-shinings to the heart, of One Immensity of Motherhood? As Her children, born in the light of these Her shrines, are we not all one brotherhood in the closest of bonds?

## THE SAMAJ

A visit to a Christian church impresses one very powerfully with the organising and co-operating instinct of the European races. Their religious thought, like that of the Jewish people from whom they derive it, often seems to us, in comparison with the rich background of Hinduism, poor, or even childish; but as to the beauty and impressiveness of their ceremonial and liturgical expression, there can be no dispute.

Nor do we class all Christian forms as equal in this respect. The old Latin Church, while much more historic, and much closer to Asiatic ritual, does not seem to us to compare, in the simple grandeur of its services, with the modern church of Anglican Protestantism. In the Roman Church, a great deal of the service is performed by a priest, on behalf of a silent, kneeling congregation. This is parallel with the part played by the Brahmin in our own services. The great stroke of genius, in which the European mind reaches its most distinctive manifestation, appears to have been the invention of Common Prayer. The Swami Vivekananda used to say that this had really been taken from the Mohammedans. Certainly, it was the Mohammedans who first thought of it,\* and Europe had been saturated with the idea of Mohammedan institutions, doubtless, throughout the whole period of the Crusades. Then again, one of the most powerful contributory causes of the Reformation itself had lain in the capture of Constantinople, in 1453 A.D., by the Ottoman Turks. This was an event which must, in the nature of things, have revived and deepened the European tradition of the Saracen and his ways. And who shall say what impression falls deepest into the mind of nation or individual, to germinate most powerfully?

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\* Sister Nivedita, quoting Swami Vivekananda, was accustomed to attribute the institution of common prayer to Islam. This view overlooks its establishment in Jewish worship many centuries earlier.—Editor.

Mean it what it may, it is certain that Christianity began by being an Asiatic idea, but ends, attaining its most distinctive characteristics, as European Protestantism; that common prayer,—meaning the united prayer of the congregation, taking a definite part in the drama of worship—began with Islam, but ends in such places as the Anglican Church.

Hinduism possesses congregational worship in rudiment only. Hitherto, it has not greatly recognised anything beyond the priest and the single worshipping soul. Its view of the act of prayer is so much more intense than the European, that it would seem to it a confusion in terms to talk of such conceptions as democratic worship! And yet, for this worship by the individual soul, it offers the beaten paths of liturgy and ritual, written prayer and pre-determined act. In this, again, it provides us with the exact antithesis of Europe, where those sects who exalt the individual experience in matters spiritual become nonconformist, and discard all pre-determined expression and form.

Christianity produces very few Rishis and great saints. Only at long intervals do we meet, in Europe, with a Francis, a Teresa, or a Joan. And we meet with them almost exclusively in the church of images and Tapasya, or Sadhan and Bhajan. In spite of a Frances Ridley Havergal, and the American Shakers, in spite of Swedenborg amongst the Rishis, and the Wesleys and Catherine Booth, amongst the saints, Protestantism can hardly be said to have made up the full tale of numbers due from her as yet. The strength of Christianity, the strength of Europe, does not, in fact, lie in the exceptions it produces. Its strength lies in its average. It may be defective in greatness; it is remarkably well represented when it comes to a fair working level, of a somewhat crude type perhaps,—aggressive, very cocksure, extremely limited in ideas; but a success, when we consider how well it is held by the majority, how little, comparatively speaking, is the lapse below it. For this, Christianity has lopped off the heads of her tallest growths, that there might be none, either, hopelessly dwarfed. For this she makes her

worship into a sort of literary and musical exercise, knowing well that we cannot constantly lend ourselves to the articulation of given ideas, without eventually becoming approximated to them in our own nature. For this, she has confined herself to the narrow ground of a scheme of salvation nineteen hundred years old. For this, she exalts service above Jnanam, and social utility above Bhakti—that she might create a strong, mutually-coherent, self-respecting average, and raise her multitudes to its level.

In matters of religion, a Hindu peasant seems like a cultivated man of the world beside what is often the childishness of a European man of letters. In matters of civic right, the humblest European will often regard as obvious and inevitable what is hidden from the Hindu leader and statesman.

But we are come to the age of the Interchange of Ideals. Humanity does not repeat her lessons. What is learnt in one province of her great kingdom she expects another to take and use. Undoubtedly the thought of the East is about to effect the conquest of the West. And the ideals of the West, in turn, are to play their part in the evolution of the East. This point of view has little in common with that of the missionary, for according to this, *neither will displace the other*. Each will act as complementary only.

Hinduism will undoubtedly in the future develop a larger democratic element. She will begin to recognise the value of liturgical prayer. A new consideration will be felt amongst us for the education and training of the average man. Notions of service, ideals of action, will come in, to re-enforce our too exclusive admiration for the higher forms of realisation. It is to be hoped that we shall never lose our regard for the segregation of the soul, as the path to God. But without learning this, we could well afford to emphasise the potentialities of the crowd. To a certain extent, these tendencies have already found exemplification in the Arya, Brahmo, and Prarthana Samajes. In Bengal, the Adi Brahmo Samaj, of the Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, represents to us much that the Lutheran and Anglican Churches represent



in Christianity. It is Protestant, so to speak, yet liturgical; full of tradition, yet congregational. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, on the other hand, corresponds to the nonconforming sects in England. There is still in it, perhaps, a greater regard for inherited prayers and formulæ than amongst the iconoclasts of Europe. But this is not to be wondered at, in a religion so much more venerable than theirs as ours.

What we still want, nevertheless, is the taking up of these new features into modern orthodox Hinduism. If Hinduism is to become "aggressive," as Swami Vivekananda said,—taking back its own perverted children, and holding its arms open to foreign converts,—it must also develop, so to speak, a democratic wing. The People must find a place and a united voice in its services. The procession must be made articulate in hymns and responses. There will be stated times of assembly,—and the temple steps may even become the pulpit, the place of exposition, and exhortation. All these changes will not displace the individual Puja. None of us need fear the loss of religious treasures whose true value we are only now able to appreciate.

But these are the days of a great new outpouring of God upon our people, and the Mother-Church, ever responsive, will feel this and give it utterance, even as in the past she has reflected each phase of our national history. We shall abandon nothing, but add all things. For the sake of the many we shall learn to exalt action, to idealise work. But Hinduism will not, for all that, cease to be the school of the few, leading them to Jnanam, to Bhakti, to renunciation, and to Mukti. Religion is not passive and static. It is dynamic, ever growing. This truth remains for us to prove.

## THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Some people strive to be truly Indian by looking back, and some aim at the same goal, by looking forward. It is quite evident that we need both, yet that of the two the second is still the more important. We need the two, because the future must be created out of the strength of the past. None of us can be educated by rebuke alone. The teacher who really forms us, is he who sees better than we did ourselves what we really longed and strove for, how far our effort was right, and in what points we might make it still finer and better. He who interprets us to ourselves, and at the same time gives us hope, is the true educator.

In the same way a nation cannot be aided by contempt or abuse. The future cannot be founded on a past admitted to be a failure. He who attempts to do this will never understand his own defeat. Before we can teach, we must first worship the Divine that expresses itself through the taught. Service is really worship. Charity is worship. And even education is worship. Because I see in you the infinite Atman,—pure, free, irresistible and eternal,—I may help you to remove some of the barriers to Its free expression. If the whole of humanity were *not* in you, what would be the use of our efforts? They could bring forth no fruit.

It follows then, that the advance of communities, like that of individuals, depends in the first place upon a clear conception of the goal before them, and a reverent appreciation of the work they have done in the past towards that end. Hence there *must* be a certain element of conservatism in all great social upheavals.

But it would be better to be *confined* to the future than to be confined to the past! After all, whether we know it or not, we cannot help carrying a certain amount of our inherited strength with us. And we *must* be hewing out the path for the advance of others. It is this tendency to limitation,

to refuse full freedom to others, that is apt to make the young so impatient of what they take to be blind reaction. But the fault is not in conservatism itself, as our youth themselves will one day come to see, but rather in its denial of freedom to advance. All religions are true, as Sri Ramakrishna taught us, and practically everything in them is true, save and except those points in which they declare other faiths to be false. Similarly, our conservatives are right enough except when they say that the youngsters are wrong, and the youngsters are true, except when they fret against the back-looking elders.

Each has need to love and pray for the success of the other. Do we want to see India turned into a pale copy of America? God forbid! How precious, as a bulwark against our own impatience then, are these staunch old believers who hold the national treasure, and guard the national colour, against all innovation! But do we want to see India with her wings clipped, chained to the roosting-perch, unable to do or to be or to soar where she will? If not, let our love and benediction go everywhere with our wayward children, in their sublime assault upon the future. On, on, strong souls, with your experiments in progress, your fiery hopes, and your fearless forward march! We know the love that burns in your hearts for the village home, and the father and grandfather. Better, we hold, could the land do without us than without you! The time will yet come when you will return to the old home, tired of wandering, weary of the fight, and leaving your own children to man the breach you leave, will turn your hearts to the ancient wisdom, and seek the final release. How grateful will you then be to the grey hairs that preserved the national home! No other refuge could have seemed so cool as this old house. No music could have been so sweet as these temple bells. It is for the future that the past lives on. The past has no Bhakta to compare with that future!

## RELIGION AND NATIONAL SUCCESS

We cannot too strongly condemn the reckless nonsense that is sometimes talked amongst our countrymen to the effect that countries are rendered effete by their religion, that by reason of her religion India has fallen upon a period of decline, and that because she has no religion Japan is a success.

The difficulty in dealing with this tangle of untruths is to know where to begin. Shall we first attack our friends' notion of what is religion? Or would it be wiser first to notice their idea of what constitutes the decline and success of countries? Some of us would indignantly reject the assumption that Japan is a success, preferring to maintain that precisely because she has no religion, in half a century she will be outstripped and forgotten.

Again, some of us would decline to admit that India is in a state of decay, being prepared to hold against all-comers the contrary opinion that she stands on the threshold of a great future, and feels coursing within her veins the blood of youth.

But these are matters in which our personal temperament and experience will largely determine our view. Hence, argument is more or less useless about them. The only demonstration that can be really successful will be that of the new heaven and the new earth, rising up about us, and the evidence of our senses themselves as to the truth. That argument will *not* be created by those who despair and talk of senile exhaustion!

The main point to be considered is what our friends are pleased to mean by religion. Perhaps, when this is well defined, we shall see that if India is not dead today, she owes her survival to the fact of her religion. Religion in this sense is not superstition, it is not fear, or mythology, or the practice of penances. It is living thought and belief, with their reaction in *character*.



Hinduism is not in this sense an idolatry of the fugitive. Success is as fleeting in the lives of nations as is defeat. Hinduism is no gospel of success. It does not even profess to hold out any short cut there. To do this is the domain of magic. Our religion is something better than a series of magical formulæ. If Hinduism were the gospel of success, it would belong only to one-half of experience.

When we are true to the faith that is in us, we become the witness, looking on at the spectacle of victory and of defeat. Seeking for triumph to the utmost of our power, we are not therefore enslaved by it. Striving with all our might to reverse our defeat, we are nevertheless not bowed down by it. In conquering as in being conquered, we stand serene, in the power of religion, conscious of a sovereign self-restraint within, that yields to none of the circumstances of life, whether these be good or ill. Are we indeed jealous of those whose whole good is in the world about them? Do we not know that in the pairs of opposites there is oscillation, that good is followed by ill, fame by ignominy, brilliant success by blackness of disaster?

Religion is the permanent element, the accumulation of human thought and character in the midst of the ebb and flow of circumstance. This building up of the corporate personality is closely associated with the maintenance of native religious ideas. Who shall restore ancient Egypt, or Mesopotamia, Chaldæa or Assyria? None, for the things that made them individuals have disappeared for ever. Even a language can only persist round some central expression of a people's genius. We must not be misled by the brilliance of a moment. Where is Rome? Where is Portugal? Where is Spain? A few centuries are to the spirit of history only as an hour in the life of an ordinary man. Nations are not made or unmade by the flight of time, but by the steadiness and patience with which they hold, or do not hold, to the trust that it is theirs to carry through the ages. A moment of brilliant commercial exploitation does not constitute historic success, unless there are forces at work to maintain intact

the personality of the victor. Nor can that commercial success itself endure, apart from character and integrity in those who have achieved it. Our religion teaches us that this world is not real. It is impossible for one who sincerely holds this, to barter the life of mind and conscience for external ease and comfort. Yet this preference of conscience above the interest of the moment is the master-quality in attaining the inheritance even of the earth itself.

## THE SPIRIT OF RENUNCIATION

Amongst fallacies which are characteristic of special states of society there is in modern times none which is more common than the question, "Does it pay?" The remark ought always to be answered by a counter-question. "Pay whom?" And until this is clearly and fully replied to, no further answer should be given.

It will generally be found that the reference is to the individual. Is a given course of conduct likely to benefit that individual who engages in it, within a certain relatively short period? If so, that conduct is advisable, but if otherwise, then not.

Now this would be all very well, if a sufficiently large meaning could be given to the idea of the individual, or to the notion of what his benefit involved. Unfortunately, however, the class of mind to which the argument appeals strongly and clearly is not one which is capable of giving a large significance to anything. If we are contemplating a course of vice it is a fair argument to say "Does it pay?" because vice or sin of any kind is always in the long run detrimental to the best interests not only of the individual but also of the society.

But with regard to anything else than vice, what does it amount to? Suppose the same question put to one of the Avatars, or the Adhikari Purusha, before He leaves the divine bliss, to put on the mantle of human flesh? Are we to beg Him not to descend amongst us, because the action will never, to all eternity, pay Him? If so, where, in all the worlds, would there be hope for Man?

On the contrary, every advance in human knowledge, every invention, every achievement, almost without exception, throughout the history of Humanity, has been gained by those who had abandoned the idea of profit for themselves, and who were contented to labour for the profit of

mankind. We are too apt, in India, to regard this as an ideal proper to the Sannyasin only. We have to learn today that there must be no society without its Sannyasins, and that many social applications have yet to be found for Sannyasa.

As a matter of fact, curiously few undertakings are capable in all their stages of paying the individual. There is nothing which is more necessary socially than education. Yet is it not notorious that only in exceptional states of society can the educator be adequately paid? Why do the religious orders of the Roman Catholic Church carry so much of the educational burden in countries that are not Roman Catholic? Only because the individual worker contributes his service, as far as his community is concerned, free of charge. And thus his community triumphs. The training of the men whom it attracts ensures its *prestige*, their unselfishness its victory. This is the case with education today. But the same happened in Central Europe in earlier ages, with regard to other equally important activities. Thus J. R. Green says of the Begging Friars, or Sannyasins, who came to England in the year 1224 A.D. :—

“The work of the Friars was physical as well as moral. The rapid progress of population within the boroughs had outstripped the sanitary regulations of the middle ages, and fever or plague or the more terrible scourge of leprosy festered in the wretched hovels of the suburbs. It was to haunts such as these that Francis had pointed his disciples, and the Grey Brethren at once fixed themselves in the meanest and poorest quarters of each town. Their first work lay in the noisome lazar-houses, it was amongst the lepers that they commonly chose the site of their homes. At London they settled in the shambles of Newgate; at Oxford they made their way to the swampy ground between its walls and the streams of Thames. Huts of mud and timber, as mean as the huts around them, rose within the rough fence and ditch that bounded the friary.”

All this was in the thirteenth century. But at the end of the eleventh, there had already arisen in Europe an austere order



of monks, known as the Cistercians, who spread themselves over the moors and forests of France and the Rhine-countries; built abbeys and cathedrals; began agriculture on a large scale; drained the swamps, and cleared the common-lands. It was these Cistercians who afterwards sent out from their English mother-houses daughter-communities to settle in Norway, and these it was who alone in that country were able to practise building in stone, and who taught Roman letters, and enabled the people to write down their national epics.

Thus even the West—notwithstanding her present loud assertions of self-interest and quick profit as valid motives of action—even the West is built up on unpaid labour, on labour whose hire the labourers remitted and allowed to accumulate in the interests of the commonwealth. In fact it is only after an activity has been thoroughly institutionalised, and made common and standard, that it can expect to command a market rate of wages, so to speak. But before it can be institutionalised, it has to be explored and experimented on by some one or many of the more heroic pioneer-souls, in the cause of the community or of the race.

Even the English in India, with all their corporate selfishness, trace back their rights, as we remember, to a certain physician who would accept from a Mogul sovereign no personal reward but a factory-concession for the merchants, his fellow-countrymen. There is no need to fear a movement that has no Sannyasa at its command. We shall find, however, that the counterpart of such Sannyasa is always a strong and ever-present conception of the community. It was because Dr. Hamilton was so well aware of the needs of the company of merchants, and because he felt himself so strongly to be one of them, that he was able to be unselfish on their behalf. And therefore the true birth of an era takes place with a rise of a new idea of social combination.

There is no question as to what will eventually be done in India in the name of Nationality. Let only the thought of the nation be vivid enough, and it will carry all the necessary sacrifice in its train. And such sacrifice, for the nation, for

the city, for the commonweal, is the school for that loftier, more remote sacrifice, which Hinduism knows as Vairagya. He who has practised the civic Sannyasa is best prepared for the national service. And he who has been chastened and purified in the national unselfishness is the most ready for that last and highest renunciation which reacts in life as Jnanam, or Bhakti, or Karma-Yoga.

But through what a strange series of Sadhanas is this emancipation to be brought about! Children will need to renounce personal ambition, and parents to make the deeper renunciation of ambition for their *children*. And yet these Tyagis of the new time will wear no Gerua. Seated in an office or ruling over a factory; enrolling his fellows in unions, or studying with every nerve and muscle the organisation of labour on a large scale; giving himself to education, or even, it may be, ruling faithfully and devotedly over a household of his own, not in the name of its limited interests, but against its interests, on behalf of the Indian people, such will be the Gerua-clad of the new order.

"He who knows neither fear nor desire," says the Gita, "is the true monk." Not the Sannyasin-clad, but the Sannyasin-hearted. He who has neither fear for himself nor hope for himself. He who could see his own family starve, if need were, in the communal cause. He who is contented to fail, if only out of his failure others may some time in the future succeed. He who has no home outside his work, no possession save a selfless motive, no hope save that which his own blood shall enable his fellows to realise. These are the men who are to be found in every class of students today. And we dare to say to them, and to their neighbours and parents: Trust these high hopes that surge up within you! Risk all on your great hopes! Believe in yourselves, and in those who shall succeed you! So forward. Do what you see, and trust Mother for the next step. For verily it is of your hearts and your minds, of your life and your work that the New India which is to come shall yet be made. And blessed are ye who have not seen and yet can believe!

## THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat!’” These sombre words are recorded in the Christian Gospel of St. Luke, as spoken by Christ, only an hour or two before He was betrayed to His enemies. Such is the strength of the Avatar, that when the whole world has conspired to put Him on His trial, to hypnotize Him into a belief in His own weakness and forlornness, He is only conscious the while of putting the world on its trial, and sifting it as wheat. He is the one steady point in the great matrix of humanity, quivering, sifting, and oscillating in all directions. He is the point of inversion of all the feebleness and weakness of the common mind, is, indeed, in the world of spiritual things, what the Swami Vivekananda called Him, the equivalent of the Hydrostatic Paradox in the world of Physics.

And from this point of view, the occurrence of the Avatar is a logical necessity. Without Him, as the Spiritual Pole, the tendency to co-ordinate our wandering impulses, in the fixed outlines of character would be impossible. Even the meanest and poorest of us, inasmuch as we are man at all, are witnesses to Him, since all our efforts culminate in Him. Even the least of our strivings relates us to His vast achievement, and to that alone. Seen in this light, how true it is that we should pray for more strength, and not for lighter burdens! It is strength we want, not calm. Calm is only a result. It can be cultivated by practice. But if we have strength as the root, then calm and peace and steadfastness cannot fail to be its flower.

The ego that is identified with the body has its gaze entirely on one set of phenomena. It sees itself attacked, condemned, suffering, and scorned. The ego that identifies itself with Brahman is directly aware of none of these things. Afar off, it may be the witness of them. But its gaze is fixed

on the opposite whorl of movement, that of spiritual intensity, and to it, it appears that the world is being put to the test. He who knows Himself to be One with the whole universe, how should He think of loneliness, how dream of passivity? He knows Himself as the persecutor, as well as the persecuted, and both alike as "the Mother's Play." Unbroken Sachchidananda is His consciousness, unflawed bliss is in His bearing. And in Him meet the hopes and longings of us all.

There is one form of realisation which can be developed in the Thakur-ghar, and quite another in the rough-and-tumble of the world. Both, let us remember, are realisation. Both are paths hewn through the mind to the knowledge of Brahman. Only the science of the Avatar can help us, even in the life of street and market-place. In Sachchidananda culminate all joys and all knowledge, even the knowledge and the joy of earth.

Thus the Avatar walks before us, in all our doings—not merely in those which it is the fashion to call sacred. To Indians alone, amongst all the peoples of the earth, has been given the boldness that could abolish mental barriers between sacred and secular, high and low. India alone, having thought out the great philosophy of Adwaita, has had the imagination to command Man to become the Witness, to declare life to be only play. It is a lofty task, to be worthy of the deeds and the dreams of our ancestors. Yet if we walk not their road, how shall we call others there?



## QUIT YE LIKE MEN!

All is in the mind. Nothing outside us has any power save what we give it. However imposing the external world may seem, it is in reality only the toy of mind. It is but a feeble expression of what has first been *thought*. "*All that we are is the result of what we have thought*," says Buddha; "it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts."

It is for this reason that education is so much the most important concern of life. The mind must be kept in a condition to work. It must be held at the command of the will, from its lowest up to the highest possible activity. It must be made competent to envisage any problem, and answer it in a fashion not inadequate. A people can afford to eat poorer food, and less of it, than was their custom. They cannot afford to let the mind grow dim. They cannot afford to part with education.

In this, the question is not of the particular subject through which we receive education. The question is of the mind itself, of the education behind the subject. Whatever the form of the drill, we must keep up our intellectual potentiality. There are two factors in this question,—one is that of the particular tool or weapon, the other that of the mental muscle, the training of the limb that gives the grip. It is well, doubtless, to be familiar with the sword: it is better far to have power of arm. Whether by Sanskrit or by technology, by mathematics or by poetry; by English or by classic, does not matter. These are but the toys through which the power is won. What we want is the power itself, power of concentration, power of thought.

India has been strangely fortunate in the production of this power. This is what the practice of concentration means. This is what Samadhi, if we could reach it, would mean. This is what prayers and Pujas and Japams all aim at,—the power of controlling the mind, carried to its highest point.

A people must ultimately measure itself against others, not in terms of force, but in terms of mind. Their superiority may be invisible, may be held in solution, as it were, waiting for the favourable moment to form the dense precipitate. But let them only practise. Let them only never relax. And the potentiality of self-recovery will not pass away.

Yet we should not allow our superiority to be invisible, or held in suspension. We should be fully equal to its assertion. It will be remembered how little Sri Ramakrishna admired the cobra who abandoned not only biting, but also even hissing. A whole community that knew how to hiss, would mean a community that never required to bite. "Peace on earth" is only, really, to be attained by this means! How keen and clear was the intellect that saw this, and laid it down as a great human ideal! How masterly was that other mind that penetrated all our controversies and summed up all our perplexities in the one pronouncement, "Quit ye like men!"

And how are we to quit us like men? By never sitting down short of the goal. By aspiring to the front on the field of battle, and the back in the durbar. By struggle, struggle, struggle, within and without. Above all, by every form of self-mastery and self-direction. There is no tool that we must not try to wield, no weapon that we can be content to leave to others. In every field we must enter into the world-struggle. And we must aim at defeating every competitor. The New Learning is ours, no less than other men's. The search for truth is ours, and we are as well equipped for it as any. Civic integrity is ours. We have only to demonstrate it. Honour is ours. We may have to carry it into places new and strange. The communal consciousness, the corporate individuality, all are ours, though we have to express them in unknown ways. Public spirit and self-sacrifice, we are capable of these.

But to realise the ideal that these words call up before us, we must struggle for education of all kinds, as captives for air, as the famine-stricken for food. We must capture for

ourselves the means of a fair struggle, and then, turn on us all the whiteness of your searchlights, oh ye tests of modern progress! Ye shall not find the children of India shrink from the fierceness of your glow!

## SINCERITY

Let us, in our own lives, and in the training of our children, try to get back to the fundamental virtues. None can ask us for success. Any may demand of us truth, simplicity, purity, courage. All these are only so many different faces, as it were, of one central perseverance in virtue, one nuclear sincerity, which makes the whole life of a man into a patient following of a thread, an idea, which he sees within his mind.

This patience, this steadfastness, this sincerity, is Dharma—the substance, the self-ness, of things and of men. Dharma makes us the toys of the great world-forces. Do we desire to be other? It makes us as dead leaves borne onwards by the furious tempests of the conscience. Is there a higher lot? Instruments of ideas, used, not using; slaves of the gods, scourged along all the thorny roads of life; resting not, fearing not, embracing ecstasy at the heart of despair.

Sincerity is what we want. Sincerity is the key and foundation of all realisations. Sincerity is the simplest of all the great qualities, and of them all, it goes the farthest. Sincerity and the heart fixed steadfastly on the Unseen—it is the whole of victory. Truth, purity, courage,—can their opposites exist in him who is sincere? Are they not all forms of that one clear-sightedness? The man who step by step proceeds towards his own soul's quest, conscious of that and that alone, is there any lie, cowardice, or grossness that can tempt him?

The opposite of sincerity is ostentation, hypocrisy, love of show. To seek constantly for advertisement, to talk big, to ask for results instead of methods, this is to undermine sincerity, to build up stuff of failure instead of triumph. It is this, of which we must seek to root out even the incipient impulse. It is this over which we must strive to help our children. It is this that we must learn to avoid with passion-



ate horror. By reserve, by modesty, by labour to make the deed greater than the word, we must deny and punish that thing in us that cries out for self-assertion, for cheap praise, and easy notoriety.

Everything in the modern world tends to foster the habit of loud talk. We have travelled far away from the quiet dignity and simple pride of our forefathers. Their freedom from self-consciousness is what we want. But it is to be got in one way, and one alone. We must do as they did, take ideals and thoughts that are greater than ourselves and set them before us, till our life's end, as the goals of the soul. Only when we are merged in the floodtide that is God, can we in very truth forget the reflection in the mirror that is called the Ego. And the flood-tide of God takes many names, some amongst them being strangely familiar in their spelling. Let us live for anything, so only it be great enough to teach us forgetfulness of self! Forgetfulness of self is in itself the finding of God.

## FACING DEATH

The worshipper of God as a Providence does undoubtedly gain something from his worship in courage; since every man believes instinctively that God is *with him*, whomsoever He might be against. Yet nothing can wipe out from Providence-worships the stain of *using* God, of subordinating Him to the petty interests of self.

The belief in Destiny has its dangers, also. For we sink so easily into the assumption that Destiny alone is active, while we regard ourselves as passive. Yet the truth in fact is that we are active and dominant, and Destiny at the most is passive. "Kismet!" cries the Arab soldier, as he speeds forward in the charge, or rushes madly into the breach. No soldier, for an immediate victory, like this. But "Kismet!" he mutters again, solemnly, as the return fire forces his first rush backwards,—and that very belief in Destiny that made him a moment ago the fiercest soldier in the world, makes him now the most difficult to rally.

Different from either of these is the courage born of Mother-worship. Here, the embrace is death, the reward is pain, the courage is rapture—*All*, not the good alone, is Her touch on the brow—*All*, not simply the beneficent, is Her will for Her child. "Where shall I look," he cries, "that Thou art not? If I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, lo, Thou art there! If I go down into Hell, Thou art there also!"

The worship of the Mother is in truth the Vedanta of the hero. She is the whole, the Primal Force, the Infinite Power, the Adi-Shakti. To become one-d with That Power is to reach Samadhi. It is by blotting out self, by annihilating personality, that we may enter that vision. "When desire is gone, and all the cords of the heart are broken, *then*," says the Veda, "a man attains to immortality."

We do not naturally love that whose strength is too great

for us. One who had been left alone for a few minutes in a cavern beside Niagara, told of a passion of hatred that overwhelmed her as she looked. It was the active form of physical fear. We should feel the same hatred, perhaps, for the midnight universe that looks now to us so brilliantly beautiful, were we free to move along the paths of the stars, and come face to face with foreign suns. Our emotions are, for the most part, the result of an immediate and subconscious measurement of ourselves and our relations to that by which we are confronted. To few indeed has it been given to know "the joy of the witness." To fewer still, the last and highest rapture of the union, once for all, with the Mother.

Those who would reach this must worship Death. Drinking the cup of suffering to the dregs, again and again they will hold it out, empty, for more. To the strong, no going back; to the resolute, no disillusionment. The disillusionments of which we read in poetry are not signs of strength. They are sudden reactions of self-consciousness and egoism, at unexpected movements. The hero, with his irresistible energy, and his unflinching gaiety, does not know whether that which meets him is pleasant or sad. He goes through it, and demands more. He treads on a sword, as it were, on air. He has passed beyond self.

"Sri Ramakrishna," said the Swami Vivekananda, "never thought of being humble. But he had long ago forgotten that Ramakrishna ever existed." This is the energy, and this the courage, of the Mother-worshipper. He who has realised the Infinite, of what shall he be afraid? Death is contained within him. How then shall he fear death? In what shall he think pain different from pleasure? He has broken the great illusion. How shall it be of avail against him? Says George Eliot—

"Strong souls live like fire-hearted suns,  
To spend their strength in farthest action.

Breathe more free in mighty anguish  
Than in trivial ease."

And the words ring true. For such is strength.  
And such are the heroes who are born of Mother.



## LUXURY AND MANHOOD

Nothing is a greater test of education than the noble employment of leisure and means. It is not nearly so much by our performance of duties, as by our selection of interests, that our character is revealed. This is why an age of luxury is apt to act so disastrously on the richer classes. The man who would have been a gentleman and a man of honour, under steady toil, becomes a mere animal, and sometimes not even a sane or healthy animal, when his whole life is turned into play. When the standards of luxury, however, by which we are invaded, are imported and extraneous to our civilisation, their danger to the conscience is increased a hundredfold. The moral sense of Europe itself can hardly stand against the intensification of waste which has come in with the motor car. How then were Indian princes to resist the sudden incursion of alcohol, sport, and the acquaintance with Western methods of gambling,—all these being bestowed upon them, moreover, by individuals who remained more or less unaffected themselves by any of the deeper ethical idealisms of their own world?

Yet it is precisely by the types of freedom which it develops that a system is to be judged. There are many different ways of arriving at a given end. A man may arrive at personal cleanliness, refinement, and honour, by methods Hindu, Mohammedan, or European. But whatever be the road he takes, he must, in the end, prove himself a gentleman, or the method of his training stands condemned. Betting, smoke-soddenness, and intoxication, are not the marks of a man of good breeding in Europe, any more than in the East. And even when they do occur, in their native habitat, they usually tend to be somewhat corrected, in their manifestation, by the social habits of their proper environment. A certain alertness of manner must be maintained in Western circles, if a man is not to be set down by his associates as an

effeminate fool. Personal diffidence and an instinctive courtesy to, and responsibility for the protection of, women and the weak, are demanded of every one. Spareness of form and hardness of muscles, together with the readiness to shoulder physical hardships with enjoyment, are absolute essentials of the gentleman. Thus the caste-ideal tends in some measure to correct caste-vice. But the adhesion of the individual to the ideal is often automatic and only half-conscious. The things that are apt to pass on energetically to a royal Indian pupil are the vices, instead of the virtues, of this class.

Corresponding truths hold, in various degrees, of all the ranks affected by Western habits. We are only too likely to catch the contagion of luxury instead of that of ideals. The Englishman's society allows him to drink tea in the morning, but requires that when he travels away from railways, he shall either walk or ride. Our danger is, lest we indulge in the tea but continue to have ourselves wheeled in rickshaws, or carried in chairs and dandies. The Englishman eats well, but he also works well; he never refers to his health in public; he masters the use of a weapon, and goes through life (if he be true to his ideals) at the price of his own power to defend himself, "like a man." It is much easier for the foreigner to catch his habit of eating chicken than his strenuous suppression of the letter "I" and arduous avoidance of degrading ease. It is much easier to emulate his privileges than his manliness and notions of personal dignity.

Forewarned, however, is forearmed. Few of us realise the power, in saving us from moral danger, of clear thought. Our own ideals are our best armour. Let us keep our minds clear as to what constitutes glory of manhood, and glory of womanhood. Doing this, each increment of ease and wealth becomes fresh material for sacrifice to some noble object. It is like the butter poured upon the sacred fire. It is not used personally, yet it is used better.

## STRENGTH

Renunciation is always of the lower, for the sake of the higher. It is never of the higher, in order to possess the lower. Renunciation is of the easy, in favour of the difficult,—of the superficial, to reach the profound. It proposes new duties : it never bestows ease.

Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful story of the penitent cobra contains in a sentence the whole doctrine of personal dignity and power. "Raise the hood, but don't bite!"—how many occasions are there in life, when this gives us the key of the situation! With how many persons do we maintain excellent relations merely because they know that at a moment's notice, on the slightest infringement of our relative positions, our sweetness would leave us, and we should become threatening in attitude, menacing, hostile! The cobra would, in other words, have lifted his hood.

But we must not make the mistake of supposing that every act of fretfulness or irritation is such a lifting of the hood. In the cobra we find a developed power of anger, a trained power to use the most formidable weapons of offence in the world, an instant perception of the moment's need, and, above all, *every one of these held in conscious restraint*. It is the power behind him that makes the serpent so formidable. It is no use for babies, fools or cowards to talk of lifting the hood! It follows that there were years of growth behind the penitence of our hero, during which his sole duty was to become the cobra. *Having gained his power*, true strength was shown by controlling it. It is the duty of every man to be the cobra. Ours is no gospel of weaklings! We ought so to live that in our presence can be wrought no wrong. Even biting may be needful, when the power of the cobra is not understood, but the hurt dealt should always be by way of warning, never an act of vengeance. Relatively

to our consciousness of strength, it must only be the lifting of the hood.

All these truths are easily seen in the punishment of a child. What should we think of the parent whose whole soul went into the chastisement of his son? It is evident here that there must be a certain detachment; a certain aloofness from our own action, if the punishment is ever to be effective. Punishment given in anger rouses nothing but the contempt of a culprit. Punishment gravely and sorrowfully dealt out, by one who is conscious the while of the ideal that has been outraged, converts while it pains.

Force is only well used by the man who has an idea beyond force. Force is meant to be used, not to carry us away on its flood. It represents the horses, well-reined-in by the successful driver. Restraint is the highest expression of strength. But strength must first be present, to be restrained. No one respects the man without courage: and no one respects the blind human brute, whose actions are at the mercy of his own impulses of rage. Ours is the religion of strength. To be strong is, to our thinking, the first duty of man. So to live that our mere presence enforces righteousness, and protects weakness, is no mean form of personal achievement.



## TRUE AMBITION

Every man's estimate of himself is a focussing-point for his estimate of the society to which he belongs. Is there anything that makes proud like the consciousness of family? Is there anything that makes sensitive like pride of race? That man who gives high respect to others is the same who demands the finest courtesy for himself. By the freedom we constantly assert, we appraise the freedom of our blood in the eyes of the whole world.

The pride of birth has been cultivated in India, for thousands of years, as a social and national safeguard. Like other forms of pride, it is a virtue when it is positive, and a vice only when it denies the right of equal pride to others. The vanity that cuts us off from the community, telling us that we are better than they, is petty and vulgar, and while it humiliates those whom we would insult, it only makes a laughing-stock of ourselves in the eyes of all who are competent to judge. However celebrated our family, it is hardly possible to be of such exalted birth that there is not anyone else in any single respect still more exalted. Our joy therefore can at best be but relative, till it may dawn upon us that the greatest distinction lies in simplicity, and that privilege or monopoly is, after all, conterminous with meanness.

Pride of birth, in fact, like other forms of Karma, should be regarded as an opportunity, a responsibility, a trust. The higher my position, the more difficult and arduous my duty. The purer my inheritance, the greater my powers of endurance. If we could but see truly, we should know that to be a man is to be nobly born, and our merit remains for us to prove. All things are possible to all men, for equally are they the expressions of the Infinite, the Pure, the All-knowing, the Free. Man may make distinctions between man and man. But God makes none. He opens to each one of us the franchise of struggle, and leaves it to us to make our own place.

Oh for lofty ambitions! What shall we do with our lives? Let us swear to eliminate self. Walking any path, doing any task, let us pursue the ideal for its own sake, the ideal to the utmost, the ideal to the end. Whatever we do, let us do it with our might. Spurning ease, forsaking gain, renouncing self, let us snatch the highest achievement that offers itself, at any cost, and cease not from struggle till it is in our hands. This is what was meant by the ancient reformers, when they said "he who attains to God is the true Brahmin." Birth was but a preliminary condition, and that not essential; it could never be substituted for the end itself.

Every study has its own problems. The Modern Learning carries its own questions. The Brahmin of today ought to enter into these. He ought to share the modern curiosity. The whole of education is complete if we once waken in a child a thirst for knowledge. Can we not waken a like thirst in ourselves? Are flying-machines and motors to receive no elaboration from the Indian mind? Is that mind not equal to such tasks? Then is it inferior to the European? If we claim equality, on us lies the responsibility of proving the claim. Let us do away with trumpery ambitions! Let us learn in order to teach the world, in order to win truth for Humanity, not in order to strut in borrowed plumes before a village crowd. Let us be severe with ourselves. Let us know, on the subject we take up, all that there is to be known. Let us read great books. Let us make perfect collections. No difficulty should daunt us. Fate offers obstacles that man may overcome. Thus he becomes the nursling of the gods, gifted with divine strength, and seats himself amidst the immortals.

In great struggles all men are equal. Anyone may enter these lists. The prize is to the winner, high or low, man or woman. But no man can rise alone. Collective effort is essential. He who mounts far must have twenty behind him, close upon his heels. Our learning is not all our own. We gain it through others, as well as by our own effort. Alone, we could not cover the necessary ground. Our society sets us a high

standard, and shining there, we succeed before the world. Thus each one is aided by the victory of any other, and the glory of one is the glory of all.

Thought, thought, we want clear thought! And for clear thought, labour is necessary, knowledge is necessary, struggle is necessary. Clear thought and rightly-placed affection are essential conditions of victory in any field. The nation that is true to itself and its age will give birth to millions of great men, for the inflowing of the Divine Motherhood is without limit, and the greatness of one is the greatness of all.

## CHARACTER

Character is latency. A man's very being is the record of his whole past. This is the secret of the profound significance of history. The future cannot be different from the past, any more than a man's body can be inherited from the ancestors of another.

But the future is not born of some portion only of the past. It is born and created and conditioned by the whole. This is what is really meant by the doctrine of Karma. The East, with its belief in reincarnation, has a wonderful instrument for the understanding and discrimination of life. It catches shades and tints of personality that others could not distinguish. In what the man is, it can read what he aspired to. In what he unconsciously does, it can see the past. The throne may often fall to the lot of one who was used to be a slave. But we may be sure that for deeply penetrating sight the monarch's robes cannot conceal the lash-marks on his back. The serf may many times have been an emperor. The keen observer will not fail to note the ring of command in his voice, the eye of decision in a crisis, the flush of pride rising hot under insult.

The whole of a man is in his every act, however difficult to the world be the reading of the script. Noble longing is never vain. Lofty resolve is never wasted. Said the Swami Vivekananda in this very paper, "the great impulses are only the great concentrations transformed." As the act is expression of the man, so is the life the expression of the character. And so is the character the key to the life. The only sequences that never fail are the spiritual truths. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." Water rises to its own level, say the engineers, and what is true of water is as true of the mind of man. One step gained in mastery finds a million applications. As high as we have climbed on this mountain, so high shall we attain, without rest or hindrance,



on every height whereon our feet shall be set. The man ruling an empire may be doing nothing more in reality than reacting the part he played in the games of his childhood. A Wellington, in his babyhood, fights all the battles of the future with his wooden soldiers. Even so one who has once found the secret of unity will never rest, in any birth, till he has reached once more, through the material he finds about him there, as deep a view.

How marvellous are the potentialities of humanity! There is no man so mean or servile but hides within himself the possibility of the Infinite. The ultimate fact in the world is man, not power: the ultimate fact in man is God. Therefore let all men believe in themselves. To all men let us say—Be strong. Quit we *like* men. Work out that which worketh in you. Believe in yourselves. For he that asketh, receiveth; he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it *shall* be opened. The whole past is in every man of us. At any moment may the Supreme Light shine through me. At any moment may my personal become the hand, the lips, of That Impersonal. Why then should I be weak, either in taking or in losing? Am I not the Infinite Itself? Of whom and of what should I be afraid? Henceforth do I cast aside pleading and prayer. Henceforth do I throw away all hope, all fear, all desire, all shame. Contented am I to be a man, and that alone. For I know that if I be not that, verily even the jewels of the king and robes of state shall not hide my shame, nor the rags of the beggar detract from the glory of my manhood, if I have it.

## DISCRIMINATION

There is a vast difference between the human being who lives his life like a mouse or a mole—from moment to moment, and sensation to sensation—and the man who lives for an idea. Even a mistaken idea is infinitely higher than the life of the senses. Even the poorest of those who strive to walk in the footsteps of the saints, is higher than the man, however grandiose his expression, however demoniac his energy, whose life is limited to self, with its interests and pleasures. We must never allow mere size to impose upon us. Discrimination is the glow of spirituality upon each of the virtues. Without discrimination, man is no better than an animal, whatever the form that his animal comforts may take.

Youth admires careless and lavish giving. It thinks the man who sometimes refuses a gift, for a reason he will not tell, neither so great nor so generous as he who empties his pockets at the first chance call. The Gita, on the contrary, tells us that ideal charity is rightly timed and placed, and offered only to the proper person. It is evident that the gift, given with discrimination, is higher than the mere largesse, which never looks at the recipient, or foresees any one of its own effects.

In the same way, it is the level of our general discrimination, between mind and flesh, idea and sense, that determines, on the large scale, our rank as human beings. We must not be misled, by the blazing energy and size of a Cecil Rhodes, into mistaking him for an idealist. The Bible tells how a certain king made a golden image of himself and set it up for all the world to worship. And that same monarch, a little later, under the spell of mania, went out into the fields to eat grass with the cattle! The dazzling idealism of self covered the grossest animality. It was the same man who one day propounded a new religion, and the

next crawled on all-fours! The poorest and lowest who is sincerely striving for unselfishness, for self-control, and to give love, is greater than this. That is why the real helpers of mankind have been unable to preach anything less than this ultimate truth. The difference between man and man lies, not in possessions, or in the positions they have achieved, or in the power they wield, but in the degree of their self-control, and in that alone. The Avatars, with insight piercing to the ultimate of things, cannot stop short of this. Yet this does not mean that they disdain secular culture. It does not mean that they place no value on the life of intellectual ideas. The whole world is to them the school of the soul, but the question of how the child behaves in school is of the utmost importance to its spiritual destiny!

“By any means *catching hold of things*,” said Sri Ramakrishna, “make your way out of the world.” Let us not forget this “*catching hold*.” No religious man ought to think his behaviour in the world a matter of no consequence. Religion is not confined to Sadhanas. Tapasya is not a matter of the Thakur-ghar alone. The name of God is not only that of the Avatars. Every great idea that presents itself in the secular sphere is a form of God calling for our worship. Shall we range ourselves with it, or against it? The answer makes no difference to God, no difference to the truth, but it constitutes a judgment day of the soul. It makes all the difference in the world to us. Every day, every act, every question that arises, is a judgment day. Life is one long test. To each little act we bring the whole weight of our character. Each act leaves us either stronger or weaker. It adds to or takes from our ultimate worth. Spirituality does not arise by accident. Only in a temple long and carefully builded of well-hewn blocks, can the image of universal and eternal truth be placed. Only where truth has been sought in all things, can the lamp of Truth be lighted in the soul. Discrimination in every act of life makes for that last discrimination that is eternal bliss.

## FITNESS

No religion that the world has ever seen, has made so much as Hinduism of discrimination. Even love, without discrimination (Viveka) is only *tamasic*. Even charity, bestowed erroneously, is imperfect.

Says the Gita :—

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतञ्च यत् ।

असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥

“Whatever is sacrificed, given or performed and whatever austerity is practised without Shraddha, it is called Asat, O Partha; it is naught here or hereafter”. Again :

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।

असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥

“The gift that is given at the wrong place or time to unworthy persons, without regard, or with disdain, is declared to be *tamasic*.”

Not only the good impulse, but also the fruit of a long habit of thought and effort, is necessary. In every deed, discrimination is the fore glow of spirituality. We should have little admiration for the architect who built a great house, on ground that was sure to sink. And similarly, the Eternal Faith holds up as the Ideal, that there shall be *fitness* in every thought and action, over and above the *goodness* that it expresses.

In this way, amongst others, the Mother Church labours to impress upon us the necessity of thought, of knowledge, of intellectual maturity. Learning is as necessary to the Hindu faith as prayer. The only religious doctrine in the world that has no quarrel with truth, wherever it may be found, or whatever it may be. Think of it! Other religions



may *tolerate* science, or persons within their fold may see that they owe a duty to themselves or to knowledge; but Hinduism requires it. Like the clear welling-forth of water from a deep spring, should be the thought of Great Hindu thinkers.

Alas, the very absence of resistance is apt to take away the force of activity! Europe is full of great scholars. How many have we? Yet look at the difference! In Europe the whole world, and especially the priesthood, barked and yelped at the heels of Charles Darwin for twenty years. Even today, one will hear a sneer from the pulpit levelled against Buckle or Lecky. Every priest feels secretly that there is an antagonism between his cause and that of the unfettered historian or critic: in India, such fears are referred to as "sectarianism", and a great historian or man of science—a Rajendra Lal Mitter or a J. C. Bose—is taken without further ado as a prophet and seer. But the very attack on truth is a war-cry calling the young to rally to its defence. We all know the story of the captain sent with his thirty-three men, to deliver terms of surrender to Hasan and Hussain, who, his message done, ranged himself and his followers under their banner, though for them the result could be nothing but death. In all ages it is the same. Truth is its own propaganda. Humanity is ever accessible to the Absolute. The thing which we conceive to be true, we cannot but embrace, though disaster, suffering and death be our portion with it. Therefore attack is better than forgetfulness; contumely is better than silence; persecution is better than worship; if only with all these the idea be kept constantly before the mind.

"When our country is unfortunate," said a European the other day, "the duty of the individual is to renounce his own career, and work for her only." What the speaker meant, was the *personal* career, the work that brings happiness, wealth, and position. Devotion to the impersonal idea often creates a career, but it is one for which we pay heavily in poverty, hard work, and sometimes final catastrophe and

failure. Only the apprehension of some infinite good to be attained by this, for ourselves or for others, could nerve us to such a choice. For this, we have to wake in ourselves the great appetites. The Sannyasin *thirsts* for renunciation. Let us so thirst for knowledge, for truth, for justice or for strength. Let us long to help and to save, even as children in the dark cry out for help. Realising that only by the laborious climb towards the highest we perceive can we be wholly helpful, let us work, work, work, to reach the Absolute Good in whatever path we seek to make our own. And above all, let us pray ever the ancient prayer of the Hebrew Scriptures—"Show Thy servants Thy work, O Lord, and their children Thy glory!"

But while the appetite grows strong in us, let us not be content with the first satisfaction that comes to our hand. Headstrong activity makes bitterness of failure. How often do we meet the man who wails and wrings his hands, because his efforts for the good of the world are not immediately rewarded! This is not true charity. This is but impulse, full of Tamas. Long work, long thought, long growth of wisdom, are necessary, ere that man can strike the blows that count. And for such wisdom, we must have experience, and for such experience, again,—work.

"Sharp as the blade of a razor, long and distant,  
And the way so hard to find!  
Such the sages have declared it.  
Yet do not despair! Awake! Arise!  
Struggle on! and stop not till the goal is reached!"

## THE TEACHER

The true teacher knows that no one can really aid another. No one can rightly do for another what that other ought to do for himself. All that we can do is to stimulate him to help himself, and remove from his path the real obstacles to his doing so.

The taught, moreover, must develop along his own path. He must advance towards his own end. No one can develop along another's road, in order to reach that other's goal. The first need of the teacher, therefore, is to enter into the consciousness of the taught, to understand where he is and towards what he is progressing. Without this, there can be no lesson.

The act of education must always be initiated by the taught, not by the teacher. Some spontaneous action of the mind or body of the learner gives the signal, and the wise teacher takes advantage of this, in accordance with known laws of mind, in order to develop the power of action further. If, however, there is no initial activity of the pupil, the lesson might as well be given to wood or brick. Education or Evolution must always begin with some spontaneous self-activity.

The laws of thought are definite. Mental action is not erratic or incalculable, a gust here, a whirlwind there. No: thought is always the outcome of concrete experience. A given sequence and intensity of action finding form and application on subtler and finer planes of reality, is thought. And just as water rises to its own level, so all our past determines the height to which our unresting thought shall wing its way. Inevitable is its rise so far, but at what infinite cost of toil and faith is won the next few feet of ascent in the clear atmosphere of knowledge!

Says Buddha: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up

of our thoughts." To those who are accustomed to think in this way, the doctrine of reincarnation becomes a necessity. It is impossible to extinguish a mind, impossible to arrest the cycles of thought. The same force, the same knowledge will go on eternally finding new expressions. Or it will deepen and intensify. It cannot be destroyed. But it can be lost. It can be forgotten. Man is ever divine, ever the embodied Atman of the Universe. But he can lose sight of his high heritage, and though its potentiality may remain with him ever, as a possibility of recovery, yet in tilling the fields or scouring the cooking-pots its actuality may have vanished.

Spirituality comes to one soul at a time. Intellectual labour prepares the soil of millions for the whispers of truth. Intellect is the open door to the socialising of great realisation. Therefore is mental toil a duty. Right belief is a duty. The highest achievements of the mind are a Sadhana. We must be true to Truth. We must be greedy of wide views. Education to the utmost of which we are capable is the first of human rights. It was not the form of his knowledge but its selflessness that made man a Rishi. That man who has followed any kind of knowledge to its highest point is a Rishi. If he had cared for money or pleasure, he could not have spent himself on labour that might have ended in nothing. If he had wanted name or fame, he would have gone far enough to tell what the world wanted to hear, and there he would have stopped. But he went to the *utmost*. This was because he wanted *truth*. The man who sees truth directly is a Jnani. This truth may take the form of geography. Elisée Reclus, writing his Universal Geography, and trying to give his highest results to the working-men of Brussels, was a Jnani, as truly as any saint who ever lived. His knowledge was for the sake of knowledge: his enjoyment of his knowledge was self-less: and when he died the modern world lost a saint. The truth may take the form of history or science, or the study of society. Would any one who has read the "Origin of Species," deny to Charles Darwin the place of a great sage? Kropotkin, living in a



workman's cottage in England, and working breathlessly to help men to new forms of mutual aid,—is he not one of the apostles?

It is in India, aided by the doctrine of Adwaita, that we ought to know better than in any other land the value of all this. Here alone does our religion itself teach us that not only that which is *called* God is Good. It is the vision of Unity that is the goal, and any path by which man may reach to this is a religion. Thus the elements of mathematics are to the full as sacred as the stanzas of the Mahabharata. A knowledge of physics is as holy as a knowledge of the Shastras. The truths of historical science are as desirable as the beliefs of tradition.

In order to manifest this great ideal of the Sanatana Dharma, we must try to set alight once more amongst us the fires of lofty intellectual ambitions. The great cannot be destroyed, but it can be obscured by the little. We must fight against this. We must remember the passion of those who seek truth for its own sake. They cannot stop short in learning. Did any ever stop short in the struggle for spirituality, saying now he had enough? Such a man was never a seeker of spirituality. The same is true of all intellectual pursuits. The man who has ever experienced the thirst for knowledge, can never stop short. If one step has been taken purely, he can never again rest till he has attained.

We cannot be satisfied, therefore, till our society has produced great minds in every branch of human activity. Adwaita can be expressed in mechanics, in engineering, in art, in letters as well as in philosophy and meditation. But it can never be expressed in half-measures. The true Adwaitin is the master of the world. He does not know a good deal of his chosen subject: he knows all there is to be known. He does not perform his particular task fairly well: he does it as well as it is possible to do it. In the little he sees the great. In the pupil whom he teaches, he sees the nation and Humanity. In the act he sees the principle. In the new thought he finds himself nearer truth itself.

We are men, not animals. We are minds, not bodies. Our life is thought and realisation, not food and sleep. All the ages of man—those of the Vedas and the heroes, as well as our own small lives—are in the moment called *now*. All this do I claim as mine. On this infinite power do I take my stand. I desire knowledge for its own sake, therefore I want all knowledge. I would serve Humanity for the sake of serving. Therefore must I cast out all selfishness. Am I not a son of the Indian sages? Am I not an Adwaitin?

## THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLE

When the doctrines of Hinduism can be formulated with sufficient breadth and clearness, it will doubtless be found that they furnish a key to the laws of thought in all directions. For the emancipation of man by his induction into constantly widening ideas is the real motive of Hindu speculation, and is the unspoken effort in every scheme of learning the world over. The source of Buddhism in Hinduism is nowhere better illustrated than in the opening words of the Dhammapada: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts. It is made up of our thoughts." In all the world, only an Indian thinker would have dreamed of basing a religious system on this solitary truth.

In the great body of observations which have become current in India as religious doctrines, none is more interesting or more difficult to unravel than that which deals with Guru-bhakti. That in order to reach a given idea, one must hold the mind passive to the teacher of that idea, at the same time that one offers him personal service, is a truth which has only to be tested to be believed. But we shall make a mistake if we think that it applies only to religious teaching, just as we shall make an equal mistake if we call a man our Guru for the simple reason that he teaches us a series of facts which have a religious colour.

We must turn a receptive attitude to all truth. We must be respectful to all from whom we learn. Age, rank, and relationship ought all to constitute claims on our deference, but nothing should win from us the deep passivity that we yield to character and learning. Amongst all who teach us there will be one whose own personality is his greatest lesson. He, and he alone, is the Guru. He alone represents that particular path along which our own experience is to lead us. But in everything that we make our own, even the

most secular knowledge, we must constantly remember the source from which we received it. Every one that we meet must appear before us as a possible giver of knowledge. We should be on the watch for the *realisations* that each man has been able to reach. Thus a habit of attentiveness, respect for the knowledge and opinions of others, and an expectation of new truth, are all marks of one who is accustomed to mix in cultivated society. Nor can there possibly be a greater mark of vulgarity and want of fine associations than self-opinionatedness and forgetfulness of seniority in ideas.

Temptations to such errors meet young men at every step in a generation that takes up a new idea. The fact that they have departed from the paths of their fathers blinds them to the other fact that outside the special point of departure their fathers are apt to have greater wisdom than they; that even in the new idea itself they have their own elders and betters; that in any case, the idea is not worth much if it cannot deepen their appreciation of social cohesion and of the older culture they have left. Yet by such heedlessness and loss of delicacy a youth only succeeds in shutting the doors of fine society against himself. He is tried once, and allowed thenceforward to associate with his inferiors. His superiors find him intolerable. A young man with a hearty belief in his own leadership, is a social nuisance. The great impulses are calling for *disciples*, for martyrs, for trembling self-devoted service in which eagerness and humility bear equal parts. Those who are ready to offer themselves as *leaders* can be hired behind any counter or in any barrack. True leaders, we may understand once for all, are made, not born. They are made out of faithful followers. By much service, by deep and humble apprehension, let us hasten to their making. "Every one makes shipwreck on the rock of a would-be-Guru-ism", said the Swami Vivekananda, "except those souls that were born to be Gurus." Let us scourge the ambition out of ourselves then, for it is absent from none but these!

The Guru puts us in touch with all that Humanity has yet



reached in a given line. Through him, we enter into life spiritual and intellectual, as through our parents we received the human body. He represents to us all that, up to his time, could be known. It follows that the first of his qualifications was an unusual power of learning.

The real object of universities is to train the student to learn. The fine intellectual leader is he who learns most from a given circumstance. The power of passivity is the highest mark of education. This passivity, however, is not stupid or inert. It was not Arjuna alone who listened to Sri Krishna. His touch was felt and his words were heard by the delighted horses also. Nor must we forget that the sound-waves which make the Gita impinged upon the chariot itself. Chariot, horses, and man, all heard, but was there no difference between their three forms of passivity? Nay, two men will themselves hear differently. Nothing is more crude than an ill-timed activity. But the passivity that marks our advance is *intensive*, not idle, and contains within itself the fruit of all our struggles in the past.

It is the power of the Guru that is the force behind our realisation. Whatever be the line of our effort, it would amount to very little if we had to go out into the wilderness and begin all over again, as isolated hints, the discoveries of man. Any significance that we have comes from our place at the end of the ages, our place at the dawning of tomorrow. This place is given us by our solidarity with the Guru, and by nothing else. The more we know, the more infinitesimal will our own contributions to human knowledge appear to us. The more we know, the more will history speak to us in trumpet-tones, the more full of meaning will the acts of great men become to us, the more shall we see ourselves to be striving with difficulty to see as our leaders saw, to be making only a new attempt on his behalf.

And when we have identified ourselves with him, in perfectness of union, then, and then alone, shall we forget the Guru and be made free. For knower, known, and knowing, shall be one.

## REALISATION

The time has come when the Great Lives that have been lived in our midst are beginning to be recorded and written down for transmission to posterity. We can form some idea at this moment of the treasure that has been granted to the present generation, for which many in ages to come will long to have been here, or even to have looked upon the faces of those who possess such memories as ours. As we read, we belong at once to those who have seen, and to those who merely hear. We can share the feelings of both, at one and the same time.

In reading the Life of Sri Ramakrishna, one is first struck with his reverence for his own realisation. Realisation is the end and object of his life. Then he takes pains to protect and keep it. Yet he has so much! And we, who have so little, what do we do, to cherish that little? 'M' tells, in his Gospel, how the Lord was one morning gathering flowers for the Temple-worship, when it suddenly flashed upon his mind that the whole earth was a vast altar, and the flowers blossoming on the plants were already offered in worship at the feet of God. *Sri Ramakrishna never again gathered Puja-flowers.*

What sacrifices do we make for the glimpses of thought and revelation that come to us? Every pilgrim after making a Tirtha practises some abstinence in memory of the great journey. What memorials do we set up of the journeys of the soul? When the abstinence comes to notice once more, in the daily round, the pilgrim is reminded of the interior experience. He is wafted for a moment into the Divine Presence. So Sri Ramakrishna, looking at the flowers he would not pluck, was kept ever in the mood of that most vivid realisation, renewing and deepening it from day to day. With us, the hurry and pressure of the little things of life soon crushes out of sight the great moments of the soul's life. It is

the little things that matter to us, not the great! Why should the higher realisations be granted to us, seeing that we have so little room for them? Only at the end of long long struggle do we gain the least flash of knowledge. And when gained, what value do we place upon it? How long are we true to it? Verily the lives of most of us are very like the footsteps of a man who climbs in sliding sand! What we gain we lose immediately, and, caught by new interests, are not even conscious that anything has happened!

No man can altogether escape the life of the soul. This is not the dominant, it is actually the *only* reality that surrounds us. The veil of the senses cannot fail to wear thin at times. We have but to set open the door and God streams in on every side. It is our absorption in the broken and contorted sun-rays of the body that hides from our eyes the Undifferentiated Light! When we become passive to it, when we allow it to shine upon us, when we are willing to make room for the One behind manifoldness, then we may find that the soul's life shapes all things. Life or death, happiness or sorrow, and the far greater destiny of knowledge or ignorance, are all determined by the spiritual energy. To this alone all else is plastic. By it all else is to be measured and interpreted. But there arises not only the question "What has one learnt?" but also that other, "What sacrifice has been made to keep this knowledge?"

Imagine a king forgetting his kingdom, in order to chase butterflies. Imagine the lover leaving the beloved, for a game at kite-flying. Yet is this not what we do, when, from Infinite Realities, we turn back to the thought of food and clothes, and material prosperity? Let us learn afresh, as we ponder over the Life of Sri Ramakrishna, that the life of the Soul is the only life, and God not the greatest, but the One Reality.

## PROGRESS

“Love as principle, Order as basis, and Progress as end.” In these words a great modern teacher—Auguste Comte—sums up his aspirations for human society. By him, with his view limited to the conditions of a single hemisphere, the idea of progress is postulated instinctively. The doubt of the East, that there could be any such thing in the end as progress, has not occurred to Comte. “Progress as End,” appears to him an absolute truth. Says the Swami Vivekananda, on the other-hand, in one of his letters, “The term ‘social progress’ has as much meaning as ‘hot ice’ or ‘dark light’. There is no such thing, ultimately, as ‘social progress’!”

The fact is, both these views are true, in their different spheres, and it is a great misfortune to a people, if they are so confused in mind as to take the utterances of Rishis and prophets for their sole guidance in worldly affairs; or if, on the contrary, their whole view of the universe ends with the laws that govern trade and war. Who would go to a Paramahansa to be taught how to keep a shop? Who would go to a Bania to learn how to attain the uttermost of Vairagyam?

The statement that ‘social progress’ is an expression representing a contradiction in terms, is an absolute statement. It was made, moreover, to a Western mind. It combats the idea that infinite scope exists for the soul amongst *things*.

This is one of the more spiritual temptations of materialism, and of materialistic civilizations. When men have craved to place the end in happiness, or pleasure, or desire, then they are apt to declare that opportunity, that education, that amelioration of things themselves is the end. “Work for Humanity” sounds very grand as a declaration of one’s object in life.

Here the pitiless analysis of the East comes in. Is Human-



ity, then, to be eternally in want of services? Is my beatitude to demand, as its essential condition, another's necessity? Is civilisation capable, in any case, of expressing the infinite capacity, satisfying the infinite love, of the soul? Obviously, the service of man, apprehended as a motive in itself, is nevertheless only a means to an end, and that end is to be measured by the individual consciousness, not by anything outside. In other words, there is not ultimately such a thing as "social progress." This is an absolute truth. Let this never blind us, however, to the fact that, relatively to our own place in it, "social progress" is a very very real fact indeed.

The love of his parents is nothing to the Paramahansa. He has attained a Reality, compared with which, this is quite unreal.

But who would tell a naughty child that the love of his parents counted for nothing? One has to rise by the very ropes that the other has cut. Similarly, for those in the life of the world, the aspiration after progress is a true and right aspiration. The world is a school for the soul. It is true there is a life beyond school, but this is best lived by him who has been faithful, heart and soul, in the life of the school, its work, its play, and its characteristic illusions. The Grihasth-ashrama is the school of Sannyasa. It is not the loose-living citizen who will make the noble Sadhu. Quite the reverse. Only when the ideal of progress has been served to the utmost,—when we have laid down our very lives for the good of others,—are we prepared to understand, as he meant them, the words of the Swami Vivekananda.

Again, there is no absolute progress, perhaps, registered by Humanity as a whole. In the West, the progress of material luxury in one class is accompanied by the progress of poverty and degradation in another. The rise of Europe goes hand in hand with the decay of Asia. Apparent good is balanced by manifest evil, gain shadowed by a corresponding loss. Yes, but this very fact is in itself a battle-cry. There is no final progress, but there is oscillation of appearances. The rise of Europe cannot go on for ever, and neither can the

decay of Asia. It is by contrast with its opposite that each gains momentum. If fall were not changed into ascent, by the energy of those falling, where would the power come from, for the counter-rise, later, of the opposite hemisphere?

Humanity is one, and each part of it is necessary to all. The constructive ability of the Roman has as much meaning for the Hindu as the power and insight of the Upanishads have today for the Teuton. Relatively to space and time, Progress is a truth; and our most imperative duty is to live for it.

Extremes meet, and the man of Tamas rates his own laziness as a proof of Sattva. Only through Rajas can he rise to that, however! There is a vast difference between serenity and sluggishness. Let us be Rajasic! Let us act as if Progress were an absolute truth, and we shall yet enter for ourselves into the supreme knowledge, that "The Many and the One are the same Reality."

## WORK

All the Incarnations have talked of Work. What else did they come for, but to serve mankind? It had been far easier for them to have remained in the uttermost Bliss. By their eyes was seen at all times the vision of One-ness. Why should they plunge into manifoldness, and renounce the Great Joy, save by momentary flashes? It was all for man. It was all that others might reach their side. It was all that many might be made rich, even though the method should be by making themselves poor. Oh beautiful lives of the Avatars and Prophets! Wonderous mercy of the saints and teachers! How are we to make ourselves worthy of our union with you?

There is but one answer,—it is by Work. By stripping ourselves of ease, of privilege, of leisure. By emptying ourselves of self. By working for others, for ideas, and ideals. “As the ignorant fight, from selfish motives, so must we fight unselfishly.” Our struggle must be as intense as that of the meanest miser. We must labour for the good of others as the drowning man clutches at a straw. There must be as much energy thrown into our renunciation as into most men’s self-preservation.

How true is the monk to his vow! How he dreads the possibility of a fall! How unlimited are the sacrifices he dreams of, if only he may be found faithful at the last! Equally must we tremble and shrink from cowardice, from compromise, from failure in the task that has been laid upon us. Well has it been told us, by those who know life, that the world has no hell like that of having betrayed a trust that was laid upon us.

Do we desire above all things to fulfil our own ideal of integrity? Then what room is there for compromise? A compromise represents a mean found between opposite desires. If we have but one desire, what motive is there for compromise? Let each of us swear to himself that he will have

nothing to do with any half-following, with lip-service, with weak-kneedness, and facing-both-ways. Let us throw our lives away, freely, gladly, as a very little thing. We would give fifty, if we had them, with the same royal glee.

Let us be true to our work. Our task is our *swadharma*. "Better for each man is his *swadharma*, however faulty his performance, than the task of another, though he could do it easily." That thing which faces me and frightens me; that very thing that seems the one most difficult; that beyond which I dare not look—, there, in the shadows hides the Mother! It is THERE that I must run to find the Terrible. THERE let me embrace Death!

"Right for ever on the scaffold?" asks Russell Lowell, "wrong for ever on the throne?" And then he bursts into his own answer:

"But that scaffold sways the future! and, behind the  
dim unknown,  
Standeth GOD within the shadow, keeping watch above  
His Own!"

It is a grand gospel—this doctrine of fearlessness, of courage, of self-conquest. Arise, thou Great Divinity that liest hidden within us! In Thy name, all things are possible to us! Making victory and defeat the same, plunge we into battle!

But how are we to fight? Most of us, by work. The world's work is the great Sadhana, wherein we accumulate character, by which, when the time comes, we can rise even into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi itself. Character is self-restraint. Self-restraint is self-direction. Self-direction is concentration. Concentration when perfect is Samadhi. From perfect work to perfect Mukti. This is the swing of the soul. Let us then be perfect in work!



## REALISATION THROUGH WORK

Throughout history we may meet with instances of the poisonous effect on the human mind of ideas without *work*. The struggle with material conditions is eternally necessary to the upward growth of the spirit. When Karma has been exhausted, and the moment of enlightenment is at hand, this condition also must be held to have been transcended. But as things are, there are very very few of the human race on the earth at any one time for whom it is not essential that the whole strength should be thrown into concrete effort, into concentrated struggle, with the world about them. Only by this can there be progress in the idea itself. Only through this can there be growth of apprehension.

Work then is as necessary to the growth of the soul as is the Vedanta, or the Guru. Perhaps more so. For when a certain point has been reached, are we not taught that these others come to us? But work is at all times within our own power. The Bhakta practises the ceremonies of worship. Work is the Puja which a man offers to that Great Power which is manifested as Nature, the Mother, the Adi Shakti.

The idea, thought of as mere words, leads irretrievably to scholasticism and verbiage. Most serious of intellectual vices is a hair-splitting metaphysic. This may indicate the potentiality, but it can never be an actual manifestation of the power, of a mind. Left to run its own course, it proves the beginning of mental and moral disintegration. It has to be corrected and restrained, step by step, by the conscientious endeavour for the practical realisation of ideas and ideals.

The world has known many great ages of faith. They have not, for the most part, been ages of inaction. The thirteenth century in Europe tended too much, it is true, to argument; but it was also the century of the building of splendid churches. Most of the finest of the cathedrals took their birth then. Similarly in India we are apt to overlook

these truly great ages because they are not marked by the flames of war or the crash of falling dynasties. But the ages of faith are in truth the constructive ages, the ages of growth, of arts and industries, of the spread of education and the crafts. Great faith is above all things the concomitant and support of mighty action.

Again the trumpet-blast of truth has been sounded in our midst. Once more is our country waking up to that renewed apprehension of her religious wealth which has been the forerunner of every great impulse known to our history. In Vivekananda we have a reformulation of the Vedas and Upanishads, suited not only by its quality to meet the needs even of modern incredulity, but also universal enough in its appeal to be capable of opening the treasures of our literature to foreign peoples. The time may seem to us slow in coming, but it will assuredly arrive, when the influx of Indian thought upon the modern consciousness will seem to historians and critics the great event of these passing centuries.

Meanwhile, what of us? Are we to give the rich stores of our past, are we to enrich the world, and remain ourselves poverty-stricken and bare? If not, how shall we escape? If not, what must our course be? Our course must be REALISATION THROUGH WORK. To the metaphysics of our theology has already succeeded the race-course of modern science. We have to throw ourselves upon this, and win our guerdon there. This is the task of our race in the world,—to prove the authenticity and grandeur of the ancient Indian wisdom, by proving the soundness and genuineness of the Indian mind itself, in that sphere of inquiry which the Time-Spirit has now opened up to all nations alike.

Amongst ourselves, however, there is another, and equally arduous duty. We have to share our knowledge as we gain it. This is the Sadhana that will make our reading real. This is the practice that will turn it from mere words into actual knowledge. This is the struggle, sanative, concentrated, all-absorbing, that will give us new spiritual muscle, and add wings to our feet.

## THE POWER OF FAITH

In the great lives of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the Swami Vivekananda, we Hindus are suddenly made conscious of the treasure that the Sanatana Dharma holds for us, in its whole-ness. All large systems of culture, of thought, of polity, need "beacon-lives," as they have been called, in which for a moment the innermost ideals of the communal aspiration are made real and visible to every man's understanding. And where the heart of a people is true and sincere in its striving, the great souls come. It was a critical moment in American history when the man Abraham Lincoln stood at the helm and embodied the national ideals. America may not always remain true to those ideals. She may seem to betray them in strangely complex ways. Yet nevertheless, freedom and democracy *are* her ideals, and no disaster that could befall her would be comparable in extent to a loss of faith in her own sincerity in desiring to realise them.

The man who has thus lost faith in his own or his people's sincerity is known as a cynic. He stands aside and sneers at all effort, because it is bound to involve mistakes. He laughs at all feeling, because to his wisdom it appears childish. He makes light of prayer and hope, because he deems them to be hypocrisy. The cynic is the canker-worm of the corporate life. He openly avows his preference of selfish to unselfish ends and believes himself the greater for it. In ages of division and mutual antagonism cynics abound. In ages of great and united enthusiasm they cease to be. This is why large civic movements are necessary to the health of nations, whatever be the ends proposed by the movements in question. In the rush and flow of the mighty current, the emotionally poor, the morally barren,—those who would, without it, have been cynics—are swept up and carried on to ports that alone they could never have attempted to reach. It is better to be united in a community of Thugs than never to be united at

all. Humanity is not yet wholly individuated. The crowd does not act as many: it acts as one, with a common heart and common mind. Nothing is more important than the power to form a single part of the great instrument, beating true at each step to its central impulse, apprehending what is to the interest of the whole, recoiling as by instinct from its insult or its hurt.

But this is a power which belongs wholly to the heart. The man who has it is like a little child, and because he is so, enters into his kingdom of heaven. He has never questioned the fact that there are in the world about him greater ends than his own good. He strives for more ends. Let the wise and prudent say what they will. He knows himself for a single brick in the great wall that is to be built, a single stone in the cairn to be heaped up. And where there is one man thus selfless, thousands more will come. The same causes that brought him into being will create his brethren.

It is for us, then, to believe in this same child-like way, in the ideals of Hinduism. And if we ask what they are, have we not Two Exemplars, in whom we see them set forth before us, in whose steps we may attempt to tread? In Sri Ramakrishna, we have the ideal of Hinduism as it was. In the Swami Vivekananda, we have the ideal as it may be. The one stands behind the other, as it were, to authenticate him. An indissoluble bond unites them. The Samadhi of Sri Ramakrishna is the obverse of that same coin of which the modern education of Vivekananda is the reverse.

When a man has reached the heights of Brahmajñani, it is to be remembered, he does not again fall from them. His perception oscillates thence-forward, may be, poisoning itself, now in the One and again in the many, but he himself remains ever the same being, of the same development, of the same holiness. It is the same Reality that passes before him under these different forms. "The *born Brahmajñani*" as Sri Ramakrishna called Vivekananda, by his very touch makes holy, by his very living confers the "badge" that others need.



To him, life and Samadhī are but two phases of a single experience.

The same unity holds good, as between *Guru* and disciples, between leader and followers. The great *Gurus* reach the vision of unity; their disciples struggle to attain it, by the conquest of manifoldness. But all these are one. The lowest of the saved is as much a part of the church as the highest of the saviours. In Vivekananda, for instance, Hinduism attains the realisation of Mukti. And in the meanest task-man who follows him sincerely in the daily routine, she merely passes to the other extreme of the swing of the pendulum. The two are one. Their vision is one. Sincerity is the thread of their union,—the sincerity and childlike wholeheartedness of both.

Thus we are all one. To each man his own deed should be as sacred and as pure as to the Yogi the meditation at night-fall. Is it English or Persian, is it chemistry or manufacture, that we would study? Whatever it be, it is holy. All work is holy. All deeds are revelations. All knowledge is *Veda*. There is no difference between secular and sacred. The modern history of India is as much a part of religion as the ancient. What! Shall Bharata be a figure in the Shastras, and the kings and leaders of public opinion today move outside? Not so. We are one. The highest and lowest of us, one. The oldest and most modern, one. Time is one. God is one. There was never a moment holier than the present. There was never a deed more worthy than that which I am set to do, be it weaving, or sweeping, or the keeping of accounts, or the study of the Vedas, or the struggle of meditation, ay, or the blow to be struck with the bared fist. Let my own life express the utmost that is known to me. However hard be the attempt let me assay the thing I think right. However bold be the effort required, let no great thing call to me in vain. I shall fail. Ah yes! My failure is the one thing certain. But let me reverence my own failure! I have the right to fail. Only by failure upon failure can I win success.

The world about us is sacred. It becomes unreal only when

we have found a greater reality beyond it. Till then, it is of infinite moment that we should deal with it in manly fashion. Not succumbing to self-interest; not bribed by vanity or comfort; not enslaved by the mean ideals; so let us push on to the greatest that we know. And falling by the way, as most of us will fall, let us know that the attempt was well worth while. It was God whom we worshipped thus in Humanity. It was worship that we called by the name of work. The lad who perished in a city-drain, in the vain attempt to save two workmen the other day, was as truly saint and martyr as if he had died at the stake for his opinions, or thrown himself down from the mountain-top in sacrifice.

## THE BEE AND THE LOTUS

In the India of the Transition there is no word that seems to us more important or more *à propos* than the great saying of Sri Ramakrishna: "Bring your own lotus to blossom; the bees will come of themselves." All over the country are workers at forlorn hopes. Here it is a magazine, there a business. Somewhere else a man is working at science or invention. Again, he is doing what he can to organise some branch of industry or labour. Every one is confronted by perplexities that seem hopeless, by difficulties that appal him. Almost every one has to struggle against want of co-operation. All are striving to achieve success, without the tools or material of success.

To all in this position we would say, "Be not afraid! You can see, through the mists, only one step? Take that step. Plant your foot firm. You have done all you could, and tomorrow morning sees you fail? Expect that failure, if you will, but, *for tonight, act as if you would succeed*. Stand to the guns. Be true." There is not one who can command means. Rarely is a Napoleon born, to find all he needs for his task at his hand. And even he has been made through millenniums of exertion. All that we have at our own disposal is our own effort. "Bring your own lotus to blossom." Be faithful to yourself.

But there is another side to this picture. The bees do come. The lotus feels no difference between today and yesterday. She knows not that at dawn her petals opened wide for the first time. She knows it only by the coming of the bees. The young athlete feels in himself no difference, of sterner control and finer adjustment, between the act of today and that of yesterday. *But today's stroke went home*. We do not know when success may come to us. Even now, it may be but an hour before we meet it. In any case, we work, we put in our

full strength. When victory comes, be it late or early, it will find us on the field.

"Making gain and loss the same." This is not counsel for religious practices alone. In every undertaking it is the golden rule. Only he who can do this can ever succeed. But he who does, succeeds. No sooner does the mind steady itself on its true fulcrum-point of self-control than results pour in. It was our own confusion of motive, our own blindness of aim, that baffled us so long. Aim true. The arrow hits the mark. When his hour strikes, the bow Gandiva returns to the hand of Arjuna.

But we have to determine what is the effort to which we have a right. The will is like a great serpent. Not on its outmost coil is its striking-point. Nor on the next, nor the next. At the very centre of the spiral we find the deadly arrow. Rearing the head high, the cobra sees its mark, and strikes. We have to place ourselves aright, to poise ourselves on our own centre of equilibrium, to attain mental clearness. The schoolmaster would fain deliver his country, but he sees none on the benches before him who were made of the stuff of heroes. Let the schoolmaster teach as though he saw heroes. Let him arrive at clear thought and conviction. Let him educate with all his might, making defeat and success the same. The man who can do this will create heroes. He brings his own lotus to blossom. The bees come of themselves.

The potter yearns to deliver his people. Let him make goods pots. The energy of his passion will make deliverers of the very men who stoke his fires. He thought to mould pots and vases. He was moulding men the while, out of the clay of the human will.

How strange that the lotus has to hear from the bees the news of its own blooming! So silent are the great spiritual happenings. Yet they are all-mastering. Events follow them. They do not lead. Means come to the man who can use means; always, without exception. Is victory or defeat my task? Fool! STRUGGLE is your task.

The higher and more responsible the duty before us, the



longer shall we be in reaching it. And we must fight every inch of the way. In the end the deed itself may seem to be trivial. It lasts, maybe, only an instant. Many a soldier has paid with his life for the turning of a key, or a single flash from the gun. Yet to be in his place at that supreme moment had required all his past. A Gladstone, a Darwin, shows no extraordinary power save that of steady work at school or college. Maybe, the soul of him knows that the daily routine is for it, the army-drill of higher battles. Maybe, such have some instinctive consciousness of greatness. Maybe; maybe not. Neither he nor we can command our destiny. But we can all work.

We want higher ideals of struggle. The diver struggles to find treasure. The miser struggles to win gold. The lover struggles for the smile of the beloved. The whole mind is set on the goal proposed. One of Sri Ramakrishna's great sayings, again, refers to the Chasha (cultivator) whose crop has failed. The gentleman-farmer abandons farming when he has experienced one or two bad seasons. But the Chasha sows at sowing time, whatever was his lot at harvest. However humble our task, this should be its spirit. Over and over and over again, the unwearied effort should be repeated. We should struggle to the death. Like the swimmer, shipwrecked within sight of land; like the mountaineer scarcely reaching the ice-peak; so we should labour to be perfect in every little task.

Out of the shrewdness of small shopkeepers in Scotland have been born the Scottish merchants whose palaces and warehouses confront us on every side the whole world over. Out of the same experience was written Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." Even so the small and humble task is ever the class-room of the high and exalted. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might."

## THE LIFE OF IDEAS

Great is the life of ideas. Men die, that an idea may live. Generation after generation may pass away, while the idea on which they were threaded grows only the stronger for their decay. Let none, then, feel that in his own defeat lies any disaster to truth. A life given? What of that? THOUGHT may be enriched by the death of thinkers!

These were the dim and mystic perceptions that were uttered from the beginning of time, in religions of human sacrifice. In a sense, all faith calls for the slaying of man. What is any one of us, unless the Infinite Light is seen behind and through him? And for the Light to be seen, may it not sometimes be needful that the vessel should be broken?

How often it happens that everything a man has believed is summed up and asserted in the moment of his death? Death consecrates. Death renders impersonal. It suddenly withdraws from the sight of others all the petty nervous irritations that have veiled the man's real intention, and he stands revealed in his greatness, instead of his littleness, before his contemporaries.

It sometimes happens that the greatest service a man can render is to retire. Great men, especially, as the Swami Vivekananda said, must always take care to withdraw, when the message is uttered. Only alone, and in freedom, can the child or the student or the disciple work out the idea that has reached him. The seed is buried while it germinates. The obscure processes of development would only suffer check from the attempt to watch and regulate. We seek ever to give birth to the greater-than-ourselves. But for this, it is essential that we seek not to see results. To give and die; to speak and leave free; to act, looking for no fruit; this is the great mood, that paves the way for the world-changes.

How many of us could cast ourselves on the ocean of

Mother? How many could cease from the effort to save themselves? How many could throw themselves from the palm-tree's height? Those who are able to do this, having faith in truth, are the fathers of the future, the masters of the world, because only through them can the Impersonal flow in its fulness. Says a Christian hymn:

“Oh to be nothing, nothing!  
Only to lie at His feet,  
A broken and empty vessel,  
For the Master's use made meet!  
Empty that He may fill me,  
As forth to His service I go!  
Broken that so more freely,  
His life through mine may flow!  
Oh to be nothing, nothing!  
Only to lie at His feet,  
A broken and empty vessel,  
For the Master's use made meet!”

## THE SHAPING OF LIFE

It will often seem as if life *hammered* the poor man, working him to that form which will exactly fill its place in the social setting, while the rich man, in the nature of things, is privileged, and allowed apparently to escape opposition. In fact, however, this hammering is experience, and is one of those the most important regards in which the buying power of poverty is greater than that of wealth.

Service, poverty, helplessness, are for strong natures great schools. It is only the man who is in a position at some time in his life to feel the full consequences of each word and act on the hearts of others, it is only that man who is able fully to explore the social consciousness. Only he whose single self-respect can exactly balance the respect that is due to others. For the manner and bearing of the subject should be different in form but wholly equal in dignity to those of the king himself. We ought so to serve that we might at any moment assume authority. This is the service that the great desire to have. He who longs to thwart and mortify the pride of the server invites defeat from his own subordinate.

The only bond that can knit together master and servant, sovereign and subject, officer and private soldier, is—not their personal relation, but—the constant subconscious recognition in every word and deed of an ideal of perfect conduct which both alike are co-operating to carry out. The man who *sees* the army, with his mind's eye, will not forget the deference due to his commander. And he in turn, being conscious that only as part of a great whole does he wield power, will be gentle and generous and winning in its use. When the moment comes for wrath, for condemning the disobedient man to sudden death, it will be this long habit of delicacy, and the fact that even now the claim is impersonal,—is made in the name of an *ideal*,—that will give power to the order, so that others will hasten to put it into effect.



For such maintenance of authority, how much self-control is necessary! How complex an experience! In the brain-cells of the dispenser of law how long a memory must be stored up! Only such authority can be deep or enduring. It is a fact which anyone may put to the test, that only that man can maintain order who controls himself. Children, servants, and subjects are all alike contemptuous of the man whose own temper is not under his own command. And again, in order to learn the power of disciplining others, it is first needful that we practise discipline within. Thus, authority and obedience are but obverse and reverse of a single power. The higher our education, the greater our ability to obey instructions. He who rules today obeyed yesterday. Let us so hold ourselves in obedience that tomorrow we may command. These are a few of the secrets of strong human combinations.

A man goes to a university, not that he may become a teacher, but that he may be *trained to learn*. He is best educated to whom all that he sees and hears conveys its lesson. He whose senses are open, and whose brain is alert, he who is not deaf nor blind,—not the man who has seen and heard most,—is truly educated. To the uneducated, the movements of the plant carry no tale. They pass all unobserved beneath his very eyes. To the uneducated, custom is an arbitrary and meaningless yoke. The long history of which it is the sacrament, the communion with ancestors and descendants to which it admits him, what is that to Hodge or Pat, to Chasha or Chowkidar? And the best educated man is not necessarily he who knows most already, but he who is most prepared to take advantage of what experience is bringing him. Thus every mental act prepares us for others. Every thought adds to our capacity for thought. Every moment of true concentration increases our ability to command the mind, and therefore the world.

How vast, then, is the moral difference between the man who applies himself to learning in order that he may lead the life of a scholar, and him who goes through the same course in order that he may enjoy advancement, or may earn

money to spend on pleasure or luxury! The one is the son and beloved child of Saraswati Herself, the other is at best but Her hired servant. This is the distinction that is conveyed in those injunctions of which our Shastras are so full, to practise love for its own sake, the pursuit of wisdom for its own sake, righteousness for its own sake. The stainless motive, that rises beyond self, ready to destroy the dreamer himself, it may hap, before the altar of the dream,—this is the only possible condition of true achievement. And this is why it is better to be born of generations of saints than of a race of conquerors. The conqueror is paid for his sacrifice. He spends what he has won. The saint adds his strength to that of his fore-goers, storing it up for them that shall come after.

Great is the land that gives birth to the Heroes of the Spirit! Mother, how holy is to us the dust of your sacred feet!

## NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

India is evolving a new civilisation. New ideals and new methods have already made their appearance. Already she is projecting herself upon new developments in many different directions. The great danger of such an era is the loss of moral stability which it is apt to involve. For the aim and effort of civilisation is always to maintain the supremacy of the moral faculty. And in periods of violent transition, the tendency is, by the breaking of old bonds and associations, to make the moral scum and wreckage of society come to the surface, and take the lead. The word "civilisation" is a Western equivalent for our word Dharma or "national righteousness," and a nation may be regarded as having proved the value of its past, only when character has always been reckoned by it as the first of political and social assets, when the hypocrite has always been rated by it at his true value, and when the will of the people has spontaneously known to pursue good and avoid evil, all the days of its life.

No people can boast that they have shown these characteristics to perfection. This is obviously a race in which success is only of relative measurement. Yet the fact remains that if there could be an absolute standard for the appraisal of national and social systems it would be in terms of morality,—not in those of wealth or industry or even of happiness,—that that perfection must be expressed.

Morality is not to be understood here as the morality of social habit merely. The keeping of a time-worn law may depend upon our weakness quite as much as on our strength. The cooking-pot is not the best Brahman, as the Swami Vivekananda pointed out. True morality is a fire of will, of purity, of character, of sacrifice. It is here, and not to the expression, that we must look, to make the valuation of a nation's attainment. Yet some things are clear. When countries that have long preached a religion of renunciation,—a

religion of the poor and lowly, of self-denial, of common property, of brotherly love,—when such countries are found suddenly to have abandoned themselves to the practice of exploitation—political, commercial, financial, or all three at once,—then we see a discrepancy between theory and practice, on which we can and ought to pass a judgment.

It is clear that a sound and true doctrine is not weapon enough for the will of man in the hour of a great temptation. Besides that of the truth or untruth of the doctrine held, there is also the deeper question to be considered of how far the nature of the man has been saturated with it, how far he has bent to it, how far he has assimilated it. Unless a nation be literally sodden with its religion, it is bound, when the opportunity comes, to throw it away in favour of self-interest. *And this is the defeat of civilisation.* This is the true bar-sinister on the scutcheon of history.

At this point, however, comes in the question of the intellectual limitations of different faiths. Clearly, a code of religion and ethics which commands the ungrudging assent of our whole intellect will restrain and impel us more effectually than one that we are driven to regard as more or less an old wives' tale. Here we see the importance of a religion that is not discredited. And here also we find the secret of the failure of Christianity in the nineteenth century. Science, by dint of her mechanical inventions, has created a new world for Christian peoples to dwell in. Alas, that same science has also led to the scorning of the very Christianity which had been the great guiding and ennobling force in the world as they already knew it, and a Christian without his Christianity is apt to be an armed dacoit.

Christianity was not strong enough to include science. Is Hinduism strong enough to include the modern civilisation? We answer yes! For towering behind the habits and practices of Hinduism lies that great generalised philosophy of the Vedanta, to which any religious ritual, any social scheme would serve equally well as area of illustration and experimental school. And from amidst the Vedanta itself,



again, rises the *Adwaita* of Shankaracharya as the peak of Gouri-Shankar crowns the long range of the Himalayas.

We are about to throw ourselves forward upon a great secularity. As a new development of Hinduism, in future, is to stand the Indian Nation. Instead of the Samaj and orthodoxy, the civic life. Instead of new worships and triumphant religious austerities, we are buckling on our armour today for the battlefield of learning, of co-operation, of self-organisation. But what of that? Can the foundations of the *Sanatan Dharma* be shaken thereby? No, for have we not long ago been told, *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*? "All that exists is ONE. Learned men but call it by different names."

He whom once we worshipped as Gopala, comes to us now in the guise of the Mother. He on Whose feet, as Narayana, we threw flowers, calls on us now to offer lives and deaths instead.

Does it matter that instead of ringing the temple-bells at evening we are to turn now to revive a dying industry? Does it matter that instead of altars we are to build factories and universities? Does it matter that instead of "slaves of the Brahmins" we are in future to write ourselves down as "slaves of the Motherland"? Does it matter that instead of offering worship, we are to turn henceforth with gifts of patient service, of food, of training, of knowledge, to those who are in sore need? If "All that exists is One," then all paths alike are paths to that Oneness. Fighting is worship as good as praying. Labour is offering as acceptable as Ganges water. Study is austerity more costly and more precious than a fast. Mutual aid is better than any Puja. For concentration is the only means of vision—The One, the only goal.

O man, whosoever thou art who goest forth to work, in this hour of the nation's need, clasp to thy heart the weapon of thy service. Let mind and body be one in the act of labour, every muscle hard-knit, every sinew tense. Let all thy faculties converge on embracing the task. Let thy thought, day

and night, be on that which thou hast taken in hand to do. Let *character* be thy supreme guide, perfection of service thy one dream. So shall there come an hour of knowledge. And the new age shall have added to the children of the Motherland the race of the saints of the market-place and the field, the heroes of the civic and the national life.

“The time is ripe, ay! rotten-ripe, for change :  
Then let it come : I have no dread of what  
Is called for by the instinct of mankind;  
Nor think I that God’s world will fall apart  
Because we tear a parchment more or less.”

*J. R. Lowell.*

## THE FLOWER OF WORSHIP

There was a mood, to which we sometimes obtain a moment's entrance, when we hold in our hands an old book, an old picture, an old jewel, or even things as simple as a padlock, a piece of brass-work, or a fragment of embroidery. It was a mood of leisure and simplicity, to which the work in hand at the moment was the whole aim of life. The craftsman was concentrated upon his labour. The whole of Dharma lay in the beauty he was bringing forth. His craft was for the moment—or for that moment in the existence of humanity that we call a man's life—his religion.

Great things are always created thus. There is nothing worth having that has not cost a human life. Men have given themselves thus, for things that may seem, to the careless eye, to have been not worth the price. A single Vina or violin—one out of the many required in the course of a year—may have cost all this to make. Patient search of materials, careful seasoning and mellowing, earnest study of conditions, infinite lavishing of work, all these are necessary to the instrument that will be perfect. But having them, there have been some that were as individual as human beings, some whose voices live in history. It has happened, often enough, that a man would give years of labour to the carving of a cameo, or the illuminating of a manuscript. Such things we think of as the possessions of kings, and we speak of them as *mediaeval*. That is to say, they are the product of ages like those of the European Middle Ages. But in India the Middle Ages lasted till the other day. Even yet we may see them persisting in humble streets, and bazaars, and in villages that lie off the line of railway. India is, as a whole, a mediaeval country. The theses of the Transition belong to her passage from one age into another, out of the Mediaeval into the Modern.

What, then, were the characteristics of the Mediaeval

Age, that enabled it to produce its miracles of beauty and skill? It may be worth while to examine for a moment into this subject. In the first place, it had a great simplicity. A man lived, ate, and slept, in the room in which he worked. He was not surrounded by the multitudinous objects of his desire. His desire was only one. It was concentrated in his work. At the utmost, by way of ornament, he had about him a picture of some god, and a few specimens of his own achievements. Thus, his thirst after perfection fed upon itself. We do not often realise how much a great workman may owe to bareness and perfect simplicity of surroundings. To a certain extent, we may see this simplicity, any day, in the bazaar. The shopkeeper lives and receives his friends amongst his wares. Study, laboratory, living-room, all these are one, to the mediaeval man.

Another point lay in the fact that partly owing to the fewness of his wants, and partly to the abundance of food then in the country, the mediaeval workman was in no hurry to be rich. He could afford, therefore, to be lavish of time. The thing he made was, to a great extent, his only reward. Nor could he expect that to anyone else it would afford the enjoyment that he could derive from it. None else knew, as did he, the precise reasons why this curve or that colour had been chosen, rather than something else. None else could realise the feeling of rest, or gratification, or the sense of successful expression that rose in his mind when he looked upon it. He himself derived from his own work a pleasure that he never dreamed of describing to anyone, a joy that he could not hope to communicate. The work was done for the work's own sake.

Nothing tells so strongly and clearly in a piece of work as its *motive*. The desire for fame or money leads to qualities that destroy all true greatness in art. The genuine worker never asks for advertisement. He is contented to do well. Like the farmer of whom Ramakrishna Paramahansa spoke, he returns to the task itself again and again, whatever be the discouragements that meet him in it. He strives with all



his might, to bring his own lotus to blossom. What concern of his are the bees?

He works for sheer joy of self-expression, and his work is a joy to all he loves. Even the greatest things in the world have been made out of the happiness of such simple souls, who were contented to work as a child to play with toys. Cathedrals and temples, pictures and images, cities and kingdoms, have all been toys to the fashioners of them, working out of their own sense of things, even as a bird sings in the sunlight. The modern organisation has upset many things which the ancient organisation laboured to compass. Amongst others, it has made life complex. It has increased our needs. It has confronted us with many temptations, of which, in our old-time isolation, we knew little. The aimless desire for an accumulation of useless objects has seized upon us, and we do not realise that for this we have bartered what is infinitely more precious, the power of steady and absorbed work. For pictures on our walls, for sofas and chairs and round tables, for an air of luxury, and an infinite weariness of household drudgery, we have sold our birthright of dignified simplicity and a concentrated mind and heart.

Back to simplicity, and the lofty uses of simplicity! Back to the bareness that was beauty, and the depth of thought that meant culture! Back to the mat on the bare floor, and the thoughts that were so lofty! Let us ordain ourselves free of the means of living: let us give our whole mind to the developing of life itself. Not in the age of scrambling for appointments, and struggling for a livelihood, was Shankaracharya born, was Buddha born. Let the thatched hut at the foot of the palm be weath sufficient, but woe the day when Indian mothers cease to bring forth, and Indian homes cease to nurture, the lions of intellect and spirituality!

What the Sannyasin is to life, that the craftsman must be to his craft, that each one of us to the task in hand. We must have a single eye to the thing itself, not to any of the fruits that come of it. We must keep ourselves simple, dependent upon no external aid, listening more and more as life goes

on for that inner voice which is the guide to self-expression. In each line we must seek for that peculiar and partial form of Mukti which is its goal. When Mukti has been piled upon Mukti, God knows if the Absolute shall be ours.

Five hundred times died Buddha ere he attained the infinite compassion. Shall we grudge a life, with its hour of toil, that we may feast our eyes upon some symbol of perfection? Shall we measure the devotion that, given without stint, is to make of us the Puja-flowers laid before the feet of God? In a world of infinite variety the vision of Reality ends every road. Let us then push on with brave hearts, not fainting by the way. Whatever we have taken in hand to do, let us make the means our end. Let us pursue after the ideal for the ideal's own sake, and cease not, stop not, till we are called by the voice that cannot go unheeded to put away childish things and enter the city of the soul.

## RESPONSIBILITY

The growth of modern cities in India shows that we are leaving behind us the organisation of the undivided family, which once formed our largest conceivable social unit, and entering into still larger and much freer social combination. The city is one of the widest groups that can be formed. Nations are made up of citizens, and conversely, cities are the schools of nationality. A city is the most complex type of molecule, so to speak, in the national organism.

In a given molecule all the atoms contained are essential. Each atom, each sub-atom, and the relation of each to the rest, is integral to the whole. Can we say this of our cities of today? If not, they are not organised on a *permanent* basis. In mediaeval Benares, in mediaeval Lucknow, each atom and each series of atoms was essential to the city. In Conjeeveram and in many of our rural market-towns of the South the same is true today. Is it true of our modern cities, of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay? If not, the inessential elements will yet prove to be but temporary. They will eventually be cast out.

There is a difference between mechanical complexity and organic complexity. Those factors which do not belong organically to the civic complexus are the factors that cannot endure. And what is the test of the organic necessity of any given atom? The test that our ancestors would have accepted was Dharma. Those who uphold the national righteousness belong to the city, belong to the nation; those who destroy and deteriorate it will have to go. The test of our cohesion, then, is a moral test, a test of character, of conduct, of uprightness. It is that particular kind of character, moreover, which makes large social combinations possible.

A study of such traits of character would then be valuable. Each of us, if we set ourselves to observe what these are, will notice different things. One will lay stress on good

manners. There is no doubt that these are very necessary, and that the standard will be much more precise and severe when we move in a circle drawn from all parts of India than when we lived only amongst our own relatives. Courtesy is a great lubricant to public life, and the delicate social emotions that make courtesy sincere and natural are one of the most precious gifts of humanity. Courtesy, too, may well be practised in the home. It is no excuse for a brutal manner that so-and-so is my mother or wife or brother. What then? Am I to be impertinent to my nearest and dearest, and reserve my best self for those whom I scarcely know?

Another will notice the need of punctuality, of order, of regular habits. All these are absolutely imperative in the civic circle. And all these are Dharma, for all mean self-control for the good of others.

We have to learn to be reliable, or what is called "dependable," in our dealings with others. *Responsibility* is God's test of man. We must be equal to our task. It is worse than useless, it is positively ruinous, like the uncompleted sacrifice, to undertake a duty that we do not carry through to its last syllable. The performance of duty, the social duty, the civic duty, is not to be allowed to vary with our own feelings, with our impulses, our tempers, even (up to certain necessary limits) with our health. "I am *responsible*" is a word that, uttered by oneself to oneself, should spur us to the highest effort, to the sternest sacrifice.

There is no reason for charity, for tenderness, for forbearance,—no reason that can be urged,—which is so strong as the *need* of him to whom kindness or gentleness is shown. And similarly, the most intense of all social motives is not ambition or self-interest, or love of fame or power, intense as any of these may be. The most intense of all motives lies in the thought "I am *trusted*: this duty or this need *depends* upon me." Here is the thought that makes the sentinel die at his post, that calls the fireman to the hottest point of danger, that rouses the slumbering spirit and puts spurs into the flagging will. And this is Dharma.



For examples of what is to be won by energy of social experiment, we are agreed that we must turn to the West. Even in the pursuit of ideas, while the *idea* is often better realised in India, its reflection in the social organisation is better accomplished in Europe. These things are to be studied and contemplated. There is no solvent of error in conduct like true thought and right knowledge. We are of those who urge neither conservatism nor reform in social questions. We ask only for right *understanding*. And we hold that the temper of mind that will rush hurriedly upon either one act or the other is not conducive to true understanding, which needs above all things disinterestedness and calm.

Let us then compare the European solution of various problems with our own, and see, if possible, whether we have not much to gain from such consideration.

Even in religion, we find Indian worship a one-priest matter, while European ritual is a vast co-operation of singers, servers, ministrants, and others. In monasticism, the ideal monk of the East is a wanderer who goes free, from place to place, working out the personal ideal derived from his Guru. He is often the embodiment of great and sometimes of supreme individual illumination. But he never has the discipline of the member of a close-knit organisation, in which obedience is practised as a mortification, and punctuality, order, and business habits are rigorously imposed. Yet so completely has the monastic formation been assimilated by the West as a social institution, that such words as *abbot*, *prior*, *novice*, *refectory*, *cloister*, *bands*, *vespers*, and others, are now part of the common language, each with its precise meaning expressed and understood by all members of society alike. It was the organisation of the great religious orders, moreover,—the Cistercians practising agriculture, the Dominicans and Jesuits giving education, the Franciscans acting as moral and religious missionaries, a sort of mediaeval Salvation Army,—that made the modern organisation of hospitals, redcross sisterhoods, and relief associations in general, a possibility. It was their work in education that laid

the foundations of all the universities and common schools in Europe.

But we have monasteries in India also. What is the distinguishing characteristic of the European? The distinguishing characteristic of European monasticism is its system, its organisation, its clear and well-defined division of responsibilities. One man is the head. Under him may be the prior and even a sub-prior. One man trains novices; another attends to guests. However many persons live under one roof, there is no overlapping of functions, no repetition of offices. There is not one hour of the day that has not its appointed duty. The body monastic is close-knit, coherent, organic, and a degree of obedience to superiors is required of every member which is not surpassed by that of an army occupying hostile territory.

Developments like these, taking many centuries to perfect, have furnished that thought material, those conceptions of character and conduct, out of which the great commercial and industrial organisations of the present age have been constructed. Society is really one, and the experiments made by each part become the knowledge of the whole.

Behind every mental realisation, however, whether of individuals or of societies, always stands some concrete experience. What was the concrete experience that so worked itself into the very nerves and blood of European races that their idea of a working-unity became so definite and differentiated? It is said by sociologists that this concrete experience was the conquest of the ocean. European peoples are coastline-dwellers. Their conception of organisation is furnished by the crew of a ship, and their temptation—incidentally, not only their temptation, but also their characteristic vice—is piracy. In the crew of the ship, the family—with the father as captain, eldest son first mate, second son as second mate, younger sons and nephews as working sailors, and so on—becomes transformed into the complex human working-unit, the social instrument, whose unity and disci-

pline are tested for life or for death in every gale that the fishing-smack encounters.

In India and the East generally, it is supposed, in similar fashion, that the great concrete experience on which the national character is built, and by which its potency for co-operation is largely determined, is the rice-field. Here, it is said, whole families co-operate, under one man's direction, on an equal footing. They sow seed, they transplant seedlings, they harvest crops, without, say the sociologists, anything happening to call forth a great preponderance of ability in any one above the others. No special reward waits on ingenuity or inventive ability in the transplanting of rice. Every man's labour is more or less like the rest and of equal amount. Hence the firm hold obtained by the essentially democratic institutions of village, caste, guild, and family, in India. India is essentially a *democratic* country. Her monarchies and aristocracies are quite extraneous to her social system, and it is this which she has to thank for her stability and solidarity under experiences that would have shattered the unity of any less coherent organisation. The only point in which India fails to stand comparison with the West is in the *complexity* of her social organisation.

Benares is as beautiful as any mediaeval city in Europe. Indeed Europe has not more than one or two jewels to compare with it. Yet anyone who has seen a European cathedral will know what is meant by complex unity. The Western cathedral is not a mere building. It is like a Southern Indian temple—a treasure-house of carvings in stone and wood; of paintings on walls, on glass, and on canvas; of musical instruments; old metal-work; embroideries; libraries; and fifty other things. It represents, as many writers have pointed out, a *synthesis* of occupations, all held together by a single aim, governed by one head, united in the realisation of a common design. And European cathedrals were the fruit of the sudden realisation by the people of their own unity and their own freedom. For they sprang up in the great age of the passing away of the Feudal

System and the birth of the great Free Cities of the Middle Ages.

If the complex unity of the ship's crew enable the European peoples to build cathedrals, the building of cathedrals, in like manner, has helped towards the modern complexity and success of industrial and commercial co-operation. For those who undertake great tasks and hold faithfully to their part in them, become possessed of great powers, and apply them unconsciously in every other function.

Let us also, then, undertake great tasks. Let us be faithful even in little things. A single wheel or screw may be small, even minute, yet a whole machine may turn on it. Let us be *responsible*, trustworthy. Let our word be our bond. The hand we have taken in ours, let it never fail for want of one to hold it. So shall every deed be the seed-plot of new powers. So shall every gain become the stronghold of a nation.



## THE WORLD-SENSE IN ETHICS

The relation between the individual and the community, the extent to which no one of us is an individual at all, but merely constitutes an instrument carrying hands and feet and senses for the great social organism behind us, this is a subject on which we think too little and too seldom. Yet few questions are at the present time more important. A distinguished European sociologist has said that man in his earliest development thinks as "we," and only later as "I." The statement is not so paradoxical as it sounds. Most educated persons are aware that if a frog's brain be removed, and a drop of acid then placed on the hind foot of the frog, the foot will be rapidly withdrawn and the leg folded convulsively against the body. This is called "reflex action," because it is carried out without the necessary intervention of consciousness. Similarly, much of our social conduct, perhaps all that is a part of our characters, is reflex.

Imagine, for instance, a slight put upon our family honour. Can we not feel the impulse of retaliation that is demanded of each and every member of the family alike, in the men as acts, in the women as malediction? Is such retaliation planned or instinctive? Can we not see from this something of what the European scholar meant? Is it not true that in family-matters we think even now rather as "we" than as "I"? And can we not see, casting our glance back over the evolution of humanity, that this must be more and more so, the earlier the period under review? In an age when individual scope was small, each man would be more true to the type of the family or the tribe, or the race, than in a later epoch, when, even physically, there is greater divergence of the individual from his kindred and brothers. Every state of society, then, and every social institution, carries with it its own reflex consciousness, its own code, its own ideals. Polygamy has its ethics, quite as much as monogamy. The

European woman has her poets, as truly as the Oriental. Joan of Arc is also a saint, though so different in type from Sita.

Taking the whole of this reflex consciousness, these codes, these ideals, and putting together the principles of conduct which we can deduce from them, we call the result morality. Morality is fundamentally the expression of Humanity as a whole, through the individual. It follows that morality is not the same in all ages. It becomes finer and more complex, with the growth of intellectual knowledge and social experience. There was a time when the morality of family and tribe was all-sufficient; when it seemed right to a people to extirpate, in the name of this morality, not only the people of other tribes, but also their gods! Indeed as we look about us today, we may perhaps be pardoned if we think that that time, even now, has not altogether gone by.

It is the proud distinction of the Indian culture that Hindus have never, within historic times, been contented with the tribal morality, or the tribal ideal. This fact it is which forms the granite foundation of that destiny, in right of which India, as we believe, is yet again to lead the world. Even a philosophy like the Vedanta, even an ideal like that of Adwaita, is organically related to the social experience, or it could never have been formulated. The day will yet dawn in this country, when young men shall set themselves to conquer all the most difficult knowledge of the world, with the sole object of being able to trace out these connexions between the communal organisation and the national achievement. It may be that the caste-system, with its suggestion of a synthesis of races, ideals, and customs, was the concrete basis of that intellectual comprehensiveness which is yet to be the gift of India to the world. Or the secret may be found elsewhere. In any case, if we of today would prove ourselves the worthy children of our ancestors, we, like them, must refuse to be contented with a tribal morality. India may seem now to be but a trifling factor in the development of man, but it will not be always so, and great or small, none

can measure the power of true thought, for the world is governed by mind, and not by matter.

Our Rishis and Yogis tell us of a stage of meditation in which we develop a cosmic sense, and feel ourselves to be present in the moon, the sun, and the stars. Far below this meditative experience, however, we must train ourselves and our children to another, which will assuredly help to fit us for it,—a *world-sense*. Through this consciousness, we must develop the power to suffer with the pain, and hope with the hope, of all men. The tragedy of the Congo Negro, the South African Kaffir, the Chinese coolie, of Korea, of Tibet, of Egypt, of Poland,—all these are *our* sorrows, personally and collectively. Let us educate ourselves to feel them so, and then, in the moment of power it may be, we shall give birth to a morality which shall include them all.

In some such way has every advance in morality been made. First the trained sympathy, secondly the cultivated intellect, and third and last, the moral impulse, ending in a new institution, that cuts a step higher than humanity had heretofore reached, in the icy face of the mountain peaks. That is to say, all new social developments must arise out of new sympathies, new emotional experiences, giving birth to new and loftier ideals, and through these to a renewal or reform of institutions. Not by a mere substitution of one custom for another can a society be mended.

Such thoughts occur to us in connexion with the much-disputed question of woman's education. All that Indian women can do for themselves they would seem to have done. Forty years ago, we are told, they had still, for the most part, to learn to read and write in their vernaculars. All over India, spontaneously as it seemed, the effort began. The simple magazines which are so essential to first steps in such a culture-process found their way, by the cheap postal system, from the city-presses to the eagerly-waiting subscribers in the country. The vernacular education of Indian women was organised by the women themselves, and some very few well-wishers outside.

Today, to a great extent, this vernacular education has been assimilated. In Bengal, Maharashtra, Madras, and the Punjab, every little girl expects to have to learn, not only to read her mother-tongue, but also to write it. This amount of wisdom is often attainable in the zenana itself, which thus becomes for the moment almost a schoolroom. In Bengal at least, such historical narratives as those of R. C. Dutt, and some of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, have been read by all orthodox ladies, and there are magazines, and even illustrated magazines in abundance.

But today we stand before the question of a new step to be taken in the education of woman, and it is meet that there should here be a certain searching of heart. Education is the highest and most moral of all social functions, and unless it is rightly directed, it may easily be made pernicious. Its direction, moreover, is more than anything else an affair of its motive.

What is our motive in desiring education for our sisters and daughters? Is it that they may be decked out in the faded finery of European accomplishments, and so take a better place in the matrimonial market? If so, the education that we are likely to give them is little calculated to help them over life's rough places. It is, in fact, merely an extension of privilege, it is no enfranchisement, and perhaps those who receive it were better without it. Or do we desire to educate the women we are ourselves to wed, in the hope that their knowledge may save us trouble in the future? It is undoubtedly convenient to have a wife who can, unaided, take the baby's temperature when he has fever. If we go further than this, and feel that we should like to spend our lives with our intellectual equal, instead of with a prisoner,—bound to the tread-mill of daily routine, and capable of few speculations beyond, in the darkness of the mental jail,—we are, even then, only men of taste, crying out for a more appetising morsel than the common. We are not yet true advocates and champions of the education of women.

The only ground on which woman can claim, or man assist



her to obtain, anything worthy of the name of education, is that of the common humanity in both, which makes the one fit to be trusted and revered as the other, makes the one worthy of honour and responsibility as the other, and finally, makes the whole question of sex a subordinate consideration, like that of a blue or a green garment. For Humanity is primarily soul and mind, and only in a very secondary sense body. "Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are beautiful, whatsoever things are true, think on these things," is a text that has even more often cried for fulfilment by woman than by man. But how shall it be fulfilled, except in knowledge?

If woman is really as much a human being as man, then she has the same right to her fullest possible development as he has. If we should hesitate to emphasise the sex of man, then we ought also to hesitate at emphasising that of woman. If we seek by every available means to ennoble the one, then we must surely seek equally to ennoble the other. The development of woman must be regarded as an end, and a sacred end. And this for the sake of woman herself, and not in any way as a mere accessory to the happiness or well-being of man.

## APPENDIX

Preface by S. K. Ratcliffe to the First Edition of 1915.

FROM an early stage of her life in India Sister Nivedita was closely in touch with the student community, especially in Bengal where her work lay. She was at the call of almost any group, so long as she was satisfied that there were sincere seekers among them, and her influence spread widely and rapidly, alike through her public addresses, which were eagerly welcomed, and through the exercise of her personal sympathy and counsel. When "The Web of Indian Life" was published, in 1904, the enthusiasm of the national movement was rising in Young India. Sister Nivedita was among the most forceful and devoted of its spiritual leaders, and the services of her voice and pen were in demand from every side. So far as the exacting claims of other work permitted, she yielded to requests for newspaper and magazine articles, and produced a good deal of occasional writing, besides more laborious studies which first appeared in the magazines. She gave cordial encouragement to such ventures of educational journalism as the *Modern Review* of Calcutta, then as now, directed by Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee. To the pages of this admirable monthly she contributed the greater part of the papers afterwards collected in "Studies from an Eastern Home" and practically the whole of those in the "Footfalls of Indian History." At the same time she was writing, month by month, in the editorial columns of the *Modern Review*\* a series of notes and brief articles suggested chiefly by the ethical and religious aspects of the advancing national movement. It is from those pieces that the present volume has been compiled.

None saw more clearly than Sister Nivedita, from the beginning, the possibilities and the perils of Indian nationalism as then understood and preached. There were many, both Indian and European, to insist upon the difficulties, or the futility, of the nationalist conception and aim; to argue that it was but one more expression of the chaos wrought by the working of the West upon the East. The confusion was not to be denied; but Sister

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\* Not the *Modern Review* but *The Prabuddha Bharata*.

Nivedita had no doubt as to the capacity of the Indian mind and character to emerge. To her, the striking characteristic of the Transition was the speed with which, in the nineteenth century, the ancient social order of India had adjusted itself to the demands of a modern alien civilisation. The later steps should be not more, but less, difficult since they would be conscious and controlled. They must, in Sister Nivedita's view, be taken by India itself. There could, she held, be no question as to the power of the Indian consciousness to absorb the contribution of the West and to transmute it; and the way to that she saw through an exchange of organic ideals between East and West. For India it would mean a renaissance of *Dharma*: In other words, a re-interpretation in modern terms of the faith and practice of the past; a fresh conception of worship and of sacrifice to the ideal; the monastic ideal expressed in social service; the recovery of the civic sense, and its re-establishment in a fuller understanding of the Indian social order; the exaltation of work, of positive character, and of knowledge, in which alone could lie the mastery of the future.

Such is the theme of these papers. In fairness to the memory of the author, and for their right understanding, they should be read with a recollection of the circumstances amidst which they were thrown off—with great rapidity in the midst of a crowded and arduous life of service in India. The reader will not fail to remark, as an illustration of the completeness with which Sister Nivedita identified herself with India and its spirit, her constant use of “we” and “ours”.

Some readers may wonder at the implied antithesis in the title between an English and a Sanskrit word which are frequently taken to be practically identical in meaning. *Dharma*, however, is a word that to the Hindu has a larger and more complex significance than that of Religion as commonly used among us. It includes the whole social conception of law and conduct and worship. *Dharma* is the force or principle that binds together; the union of traditional thought and faith of common custom, loyalty, and understanding, that makes of society an organic or religious unity. “This patience, this steadfastness, this sincerity,” Sister Nivedita wrote, “is *Dharma*—the substance, the self-ness, of things and of men.”<sup>1</sup> She preferred to translate the word as

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<sup>1</sup> P. 418.

the National Righteousness, and on the whole perhaps that is as close to an equivalent term in English as we may hope to achieve.

Viscount Haldane, in the address delivered before the American Bar Association in 1913,<sup>1</sup> has some remarks on the principle of Higher Nationality which bear upon the matter. Law, in the greater sense, he said, imports something more than the code of rules laid down by the State; it has a relation to the obligations of conscience and the General Will of Society. The field of individual conduct is covered, in the case of the citizen, only to a small extent by legality on the one hand and the dictates of the individual conscience on the other. "There is a more extensive system of guidance which regulates conduct and which differs from both in its character and sanction." Lord Haldane continues:—

In the English language we have no name for it, and this is unfortunate, for the lack of a distinctive name has occasioned confusion both of thought and of expression. German writers have, however, marked out the system to which I refer and have given it the name of *Sittlichkeit* . . . . . *Sittlichkeit* is the system of habitual customary conduct, ethical rather than legal, which embraces all those obligations of the citizen which it is "bad form" or "not the thing" to disregard.

*Sitte* is the German for custom, and *Sittlichkeit* implies custom and a habit of mind and action; let us say, the blend of social morality and social sanction embodying the ideal of the conduct of people towards each other and towards the community to which they belong.

Without such conduct and the restraints which it imposes there could be no tolerable social life, and real freedom from interference would not be enjoyed. It is the instinctive sense of what to do and what not to do in daily life and behaviour that is the source of liberty and ease. And it is this instinctive sense of obligation that is the chief foundation of society. Its reality takes objective shape and displays itself in family life and in our other civic and social institutions. It is not limited to any one form, and it is capable of manifesting itself

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<sup>1</sup> "Higher Nationality," London: John Murray, 1913.



in new forms and of developing and changing old forms. Indeed the civic community is more than a political fabric. It includes all the social institutions in and by which the individual life is influenced—such as are the family, the school, the church, the legislature, and the executive. None of these can subsist in isolation from the rest; together they and other institutions of the kind form a single organic whole, the whole which is known as the Nation.<sup>1</sup>

Sister Nivedita would have accepted every word of this exposition as covering a great part of the life of citizenship. And she would have added, with truth, that *Dharma* is a finer and more satisfying word for the living principle of conduct and society—finer and more satisfying in the measure of the infinitely more rich and profound conception which the Indian has of religion than the conception reached by the people from whom Lord Haldane borrowed his word.

LONDON

August, 1915

S. K. RATCLIFFE

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<sup>1</sup> "Higher Nationality," p. 23.



# AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM





# AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM

## I

### THE BASIS

"The *True* Hinduism, that made men work, not dream."

Dr. J. C. Bose.

ONE of the most valuable generalisations of the modern era is that which was first arrived at, just about the time of the French Revolution, that *the individual, in his development, follows the race*. Each man and woman, that is to say, when perfectly educated, becomes an epitome of the history either of his or her own race, or of Humanity as a whole. This great perception made itself felt as a definite element in a new scheme of education, through Pestalozzi, —the saint and Guru of teachers in the twentieth century West. Pestalozzi saw that, if there were ever to be hope for the people, it must be through an education at once modern, that is liberal, psychological, that is founded on a knowledge of mental laws, and in accordance with the historic development of man.

The problem which the young student Pestalozzi, son and lover of the people, had to face at the end of the French Revolution, in Switzerland, was of trifling magnitude compared with that which confronts the son and lover of India today. And yet, in their innermost nature, the two are identical. For this, like that, consists in the difficulty of opening up the human field to a new thought-harvest, while

at the same time avoiding the evils of mere surface-culture. The soil that has brought forth the mango and the palm ought not to be degraded to producing only gourds and vetches. And similarly, the land of the Vedas and of Jnana-Yoga has no right to sink into the role of mere critic or imitator of European Letters.

Yet this is the present condition of Indian culture, and it appears likely to remain so, unless the Indian mind can deliberately discipline itself to the historic point of view. To do this is like adjusting oneself to a new dimension. Things which were hitherto merged in each other all at once become distinct. That which till now was instinctive is suddenly seen to have a goal, which is capable, in its turn, of clear definition. The social and the religious idea, under Hinduism as under Islam, were in the past indistinguishable. Philosophically, of course, every tyro could detach one from the other; in practice, however, they were one, and could not be separated. For religious reasons, as was supposed, we must eat in a certain way, wear specified clothing, and fulfil a definite scheme of purification. Suddenly, through the modern catastrophe, the sunlight of comparison, contrast, and relativity is poured over the whole area, and we discover that by living up to custom, we have been not accumulating pious merit, but merely approximating to that ideal of absolute refinement, cleanliness, and purity, which is the dream of all fine human life, and which may as well, or better, be achieved by some other canon as by our own. Seeing the goal thus clearly, we become able to analyse and compare various methods; to add to our own conduct the virtues of others, and to eliminate from it the defects of all. Above all, we find out how to distinguish effectively between the social idea and religion. It is thus that it becomes possible to talk of "aggressive Hinduism."

Aggression is to be the dominant characteristic of the India that is today in school and class-room,—aggression, and the thought and ideals of aggression. Instead of passivity, activity; for the standard of weakness, the standard of

strength; in place of a steadily yielding defence, the ringing cheer of the invading host. Merely to change the attitude of the mind in this way is already to accomplish a revolution. And the inception of some such change will have become evident to us all within a dozen years.

But before the first step can be taken there must be clear thought about essentials. The object of all religious systems is the formation of character. Theocratic systems aim at the construction of character through the discipline of personal habit. But at bottom it is character and not habit that they desire to create. No one will dispute that her ideals are a still prouder fruit of Hinduism than her widespread refinement. It is true that India is the only country in the world where a penniless wanderer may surpass a king in social prestige. But still grander is the fact that the king may be a Janaka, and the beggar a Shuka Deva.

Let us, then, touch on the comparative study of the value of habit as a factor in the evolution of character. We find in India that society watches a man all the years of his life, ready to criticise him for the hour at which he bathes and eats and prays, the mode of his travel, the fashion in which, perhaps, he wears his hair. To attempt a serious innovation on social custom in such directions as marriage or education seems to horrified public opinion not merely selfish, but also sacrilegious. And this kind of criticism becomes more and more powerful over the individual as the villages empty themselves into the cities. For the man who might have had the courage to make his mark in the smaller community would think it presumptuous to go his own way in the larger. Hence the aggregation of men tends to become the multiplication of their weaknesses and defects. It is the mean and warped judgment that gains fastest in weight.

But let us look at a community in which active ends and ideals are energetically pursued. Here a certain standard of personal refinement is exacted of the individual, as rigidly as in India itself. But public opinion, being strong enough to kill, does not stoop to discuss such points. The learning of

the method is relegated to the nursery, where it is imparted by women. Having passed through this stage of his education, it is not expected that the hero will fall short in future of its standards; but if he did so, society would know how to punish him, by ignoring his existence. Both he and society, meanwhile, are too busy with other efforts to be able to waste force on what is better left to his own pride. For a whole new range of ideals has now come in sight. From the time that a Western child steps out of the nursery, it is not quietness, docility, resignation, and obedience, that his teachers and guardians strive to foster in him, so much as strength, initiative, sense of responsibility, and power of rebellion. Temper and self-will are regarded by Western educators as a very precious power, which must by no means be crushed or destroyed, though they must undoubtedly be disciplined and subordinated to impersonal ends. It is for this reason that fighting is encouraged in our playgrounds, the only stipulation being for fairplay. To forbid a boy to undergo the physical ordeal, means, as we think, undermining his sincerity, as well as his courage. But for him to strike one who is weaker than himself is to stand disgraced amongst his equals.

That is to say, a social evolution which in Asia has occupied many centuries is in the West relegated to, at most, the first ten years of a child's upbringing, and he then passes into the period of chivalry. Indeed if, as some suppose, the ten Avatars of Vishnu are but the symbol of a single perfect life, India herself has not failed to point this lesson. For after the stages of fish, tortoise, boar, and man-lion, are all safely and happily passed, and the child has become "a little man," it still remains for him to be twice a Kshatriya before he is able to become a Buddha. What is this but the modern generalisation that the individual in his development follows the race? And in the last sublime myth of Kalki, may it not be that we have the prophecy of a great further evolution, in which Buddhahood itself shall plunge once more into a sovereign



act of redeeming love and pity, and initiate, for every individual of us, the triumph of active and aggressive ideals?

Let us suppose, then, that we see Hinduism no longer as the preserver of Hindu custom, but *as the creator of Hindu character*. It is surprising to think how radical a change is entailed in many directions by this conception. We are no longer oppressed with jealousy or fear, when we contemplate encroachments on our social and religious consciousness. Indeed, the idea of encroachment has ceased, because our work is not now to protect ourselves but to convert others. Point by point, we are determined, not merely to keep what we had, but to win what we never had before. The question is no longer of other people's attitude to us, but, rather, of what we think of them. It is not, how much have we kept? but, how much have we annexed? We cannot afford, now, to lose, because we are sworn to carry the battle far beyond our remotest frontiers. We no longer dream of submission, because struggle itself has become only the first step towards a distant victory to be won.

No other religion in the world is so capable of this dynamic transformation as Hinduism. To Nagarjuna and Buddhaghosha, the Many was real and the Ego unreal. To Shankaracharya, the One was real and the Many unreal. To Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the Many and the One were the same Reality, perceived differently and at different times by the human consciousness. Do we realize what this means? It means that CHARACTER IS SPIRITUALITY. It means that laziness and defeat are not renunciation. It means that to protect another is infinitely greater than to attain salvation. It means that Mukti lies in overcoming the thirst for Mukti. It means that conquest may be the highest form of Sannyasa. It means, in short, that Hinduism is become aggressive, that the trumpet of Kalki is sounded already in our midst, and that it calls all that is noble, all that is lovely, all that is strenuous and heroic amongst us, to a battlefield on which the bugles of retreat shall never more be heard.

## II

### THE TASK BEFORE US

“Forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not good; fight is better.  
Forgive, when you can bring legions of angels to an easy victory.”

Vivekananda.

IT is small wonder if, in the act of transition from old forms to new,—from a mode of thought some centuries venerable, to one untried, and at best but modern,—it is small wonder if in the throes of so great a crisis, India should have passed through a generation or two of intellectual confusion. The astonishing phenomenon is rather the speed and ease of her re-adjustment. Within fifty years to have assimilated a new language, and that of an unforeseen type, and to have made changes at almost every rung in the ladder of ideal culture,—is this a little thing? Is it a fact that could be duplicated anywhere? To speak, in reply, of Japan, is mere foolishness. The problem of Japan, when mid-way through the nineteenth century, could hardly be compared with that of India. A small and compact people, of single origin, inhabiting islands and strong in their sense of insularity, could naturally mobilize themselves in any direction they pleased. The number of people in India today who speak English fluently would people two or three Japans more than once. And in spite of all efforts to prevent it, the knowledge of English will go on spreading.

The trouble hitherto has been that the people were as passive to modern culture as to ancient. In a land where the segregation of the soul has been the aim of the highest thought and life, for thousands of years, it has not been easy to turn every energy suddenly in the direction of activity and mutual co-operation. At bottom, however, there is strength enough in India, and in spite of the demoralisation

of hunger and baffled hope, her people are about to set foot on the threshold of a new era. The ebb of the tide has already reached its utmost. The reaction of fortune is about to commence. That this is so, is due to the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian people can take a bird's-eye view of their past history, and are able to understand clearly their true position.

There is a saying in India that to see through Maya is to destroy her. But few realise how literally this is true. The disaster or difficulty that has ceased to confuse and bewilder us, is about to be defeated. The evil about which we can think and express ourselves clearly, has already lost its power. To measure our defeat accurately is to reverse it. When a people, as a people, from the highest to the lowest, are united in straight and steady understanding of their circumstances, without doubt and without illusion, then events are about to precipitate themselves. Discrimination is the mark of the highest spirituality. Spirituality is the only irresistible force. Like the fire that wraps a forest in flame, is the power of the mind of a whole nation.

From the year 1858 onwards, there has been no possible goal for the Indian people but a complete assimilation of the modern consciousness. At that point the mediaeval order was at an end. Prithvi Rai and Shah Jehan, Ashoka and Akbar were mingled in a common oblivion. Only the soil they had loved, only the people they had led, remained, to address themselves to a new task, to stand or fall by their power to cope with a new condition. Sharp as the contrast between the Ganga and the Jamuna was the difference between the mediaeval and the modern. Invincible as the resistless current of the Bhagirathi is that new India that is to be born of both.

Up to the present, however, in the exhaustion of the transition, it has not been possible for the national mind to envisage the problem, so as to see or state its terms clearly. Today this first stage is over. The Indian mind is no longer in blind collapse. It is awaking to fresh strength, and

about to survey both past and present, that by their means it may determine and forecast its future.

What are the *differentia*, what is the precise problem of this modern age? Definitions are proverbially rash, but it is not difficult to state some facts and considerations bearing on this subject, with great precision. The outstanding fact about the modern period has been, undoubtedly, the geographical discovery of the world as a whole. The one characteristic of the modern mind, that makes it unlike the mind of any other age, is the completeness with which it is able to survey and define the surface of the planet Earth. The discovery of steam, with the consequent invention of railways and steamboats, has undoubtedly been the efficient cause of this exploration, and out of the consequent clash of faiths and cultures, has come the power to make the personal or mythological equation; to cancel, more or less to one's own satisfaction, all the elements of local prejudice in a given problem; and from this again has been born the ideal of modern science, of modern culture generally, the attempt to extract the root-fact from all the diversity of phenomena in which it clothes itself.

In this way, the intellectual and spiritual discovery of the world has followed hard on the physical or geographical. In culture, a new era has been proclaimed. It is no longer enough to know one thing well. It is also incumbent upon us to understand its place amongst other things, and its relation to the scheme of knowledge as a whole.

The pioneers of modernism, meanwhile, have been dominated by the ideal of the machine, to which they have owed so much of their success. To this fact we may trace our present-day standards of order and efficiency. A large house of business, with its staff, is simply a human machine of an intricate kind. It has been said that the Oriental regards his servants as personal attendants, the Western as so many hidden machines. Nothing could be more true. The Oriental is in every case an agriculturist, accustomed to the picturesque disorder of seed-time and harvest, cowshed and barn,



and far from irritated by it. Every thought and habit of the Western, on the other hand, is dominated by the notion of mechanical accuracy and efficiency, and by the effort of the mechanician to achieve a given end by the most economical possible means.

In a society in which the highest knowledge fulfils the twofold test of order and synthesis, the great sin is provincialism. And here the new world differs from the old, in which the tastes of aristocrats were supreme, and mortal crime lay in vulgarity.

But while the great intellectual and social failure of today lies in provincialism, no serious mind assumes that the world-idea is to be arrived at easily. Only the tree that is firm-rooted in its own soil can offer us a perfect crown of leaf and blossom. And similarly, only the heart that responds perfectly to the claims of its immediate environment, only the character that fulfils to the utmost its stint of civic duty, only this heart and mind is capable of taking its place in the ranks of the truly cosmopolitan. Only the fully national can possibly contribute to the cosmo-national.

And this is understood today by cultured persons, all the world over. The cheap superciliousness of the young man who, on leaving his village in Kamschatka or Uganda, has been initiated into the habits and manners of the European democracy, and takes himself for this reason as an exalted and competent critic of his own people, only evokes a smile. No one desires his acquaintance, for he has nothing to add to the thought-world of those with whom he is so proud to have been associated. Every act, every movement, writes large across his forehead the word "snob."

On the other hand, to take one's stand persistently on the local prejudices of the village in Kamschatka or Uganda, is, though infinitely more manly and self-respecting, almost as futile. It is better to be provincial than to be vulgar, for our horror of vulgarity is the longer-grown. But both miss the effective achievement. What the time demands of us is that in us our whole past shall be made a part of the world's life.

This is what is called the realisation of the national idea. But it must be realised everywhere, *in the world idea*. In order to attain a larger power of giving, we may break through any barrier of custom. But it is written inexorably in the very nature of things that, if we sacrifice custom merely for some mean or selfish motive, fine men and women everywhere will refuse to admit us to their fellowship.

Cosmo-nationality of thought and conduct, then, is not easy for any man to reach. Only through a perfect realisation of his own nationality can anyone, anywhere, win to it. And cosmo-nationality consists in *holding the local idea in the world idea*. It is well known that culture is a matter of sympathy, rather than of information. It would follow that the cultivation of the sense of humanity as a whole, is the essential feature of a modern education. But this cannot be achieved by mere geographical knowledge. The unification of the world has emancipated the human mind to some extent, and we now understand that a man's character is the sum of his assimilated experiences; in other words, that his history is written in his face. And what is true of persons we see also to be true of countries. The very landscape is a key to the hopes and dreams of men. Their hopes and dreams explain to us the heritage they have left. History, then, is as essential to the modern consciousness as geography. It is the second dimension, as it were, of TRUTH, as we now seek it, naked and dynamic.

Our changed attitude changes all our conceptions. We make a new survey of our knowledge, and are no longer content to view dog as dog and cow as cow, but must needs learn all the links and developments between them. Their very differences are now regarded by us as a guarantee of their fundamental community of origin. We break open the rocks and scour the waste places of the earth, that we may find forms which will explain to us the divergence of horse-hoof from cow-hoof, reptile from fish, and bird from both.

Or we turn to the study of art and letters. Here again, our scrutiny has entered on the comparative stage. If we

investigate the records of Baghdad, we must understand also those of Moorish Spain. It is not enough to follow the course of chivalry in France, unless we also assist at its birth in the German forests. Our idea of unity has become organic, evolutionary, and some picture of the movement and clash of the world as a whole is an overmastering need.

Yet even the finest mind is limited by its own ignorance. What a painful blank in modern culture whenever we come upon the word 'China'! How little has it been possible to say about India to which any cultivated Indian can give more than a pitying smile! And how utterly misunderstood is the Mohammedan world! The world of culture, be it remembered, is not tainted by political corruption. Race-prejudice has no place in the ideal aspiration after knowledge. Why then should a silence, almost political, pervade the spaces that ought to be filled with Oriental interpretation, in modern thought?

The reason, as regards India, is easy enough to find. The Indian mind has not reached out to conquer and possess its own land as its own inalienable share and trust, in the world as a whole. It has been content, even in things modern, to take obediently whatever was given to it. And the newness and strangeness of the thing given, has dazed it. The Indian people as a whole for the last two generations have been as men walking in a dream, without manhood, without power to react freely against conditions, without even common-sense.

But today, in the deliberate adoption of an aggressive policy, we have put all this behind us. Realising that life is struggle, we are now determined that our wrestling with the powers that are against us, shall enable us to contribute to the world's sum of culture, not merely to make adaptations from it. Our part henceforth is active, and not passive. The Indianising of India, the organising of our national thought, the laying out of our line of march, all this is to be done by us, not by others on our behalf. We accept no more programmes. Henceforth are we become the makers of pro-

grammes. We obey no more policies. Henceforth do we create policies. We refuse longer to call by the name of 'education' the apprenticeship necessary for a ten-rupee clerkship. We put such things in their true place. We ordain ourselves intellectually free. What then is the task before us?

Our task is to translate ancient knowledge into modern equivalents. We have to clothe the old strength in a new form. The new form *without* that old strength is nothing but a mockery: almost equally foolish is the savage anachronism of an old-time power without fit expression. Spiritually, intellectually, there is no undertaking but we must attempt it.

Great realms of the ideal open for our exploration. New conceptions of life and duty and freedom; new ideas of citizenship; untried expressions of love and friendship—into all these we must throw ourselves with burning energy, and make them our own.

We must create a history of India in living terms. Up to the present that history, as written in English, practically begins with Warren Hastings, and crams in certain unavoidable preliminaries, which cover a few thousands of years and, troublesome as they are, cannot be altogether omitted! All this is merely childish and has to be brought to the block. The history of India has yet to be written for the first time. It has to be humanised, emotionalised, made the trumpet-voice and evangel of the races that inhabit India. And to do this, it must be re-connected with *place*. Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, are the present view-points! Surely the heroes that sleep on ancient battle-fields, the forefathers that made for themselves the wide-walled cities, the scholars that left behind them precious thought and script, have laughed sometimes when they have not wept to see from high heaven the grotesque docility of their descendants! The history of India consists in truth of the strata of at least three thousand years. Ocean-bed and river-sands, forest and marsh, and ocean-floor again, lie piled one upon the other—and in each period some new point is centre. Ayodhya and Hastinapura, Indraprastha and Pataliputra, Ujjain and Delhi, Conjeeve-



ram and Amaravati, what of the vanished worlds of which all these were born? There is no evangel without worship. Throw yourselves, children of India, into the worship of these and your whole past. Strive passionately for *knowledge*. Yours are the spades and mattocks of this excavation. For with you and not with the foreigner are the thought and language that will make it easy to unearth the old significance. India's whole hope lies in a deeper research, a more rigid investigation of facts. With her, encouragement, and not despair, is on the side of truth!

Great literatures have to be created in each of the vernaculars. These literatures must voice the past, translate the present, forecast the future. The science and the imagination of Europe have to be brought, through the vernacular, to every door. India cannot afford to imitate foreign institutions. Neither can she afford to remain ignorant of foreign ideals. The history of the past has to be re-written in simple terms. True hope for the time to come must fill all hearts, like a nation's Common Prayer. On the creation of such vernacular literatures depends the effective education of women.

Art must be reborn. Not the miserable travesty of would-be Europeanism that we at present know. There is no voice like that of art to reach the people. A song, a picture—these are may be the fiery cross,\* that reaches all the tribes, and makes them one. And art *will* be reborn, for she has found a new subject,—India herself. Ah, to be a thinker in bronze and give to the world the beauty of the Southern *Pariah*, as he swings, scarce-clad, along the Beach-Road at Madras! Ah, to be a Millet, and paint the woman worshipping at dawn beside the sea! Oh for a pencil that would interpret the beauty of the Indian sari; the gentle life of village and temple; the coming and going at the Ganges side; the play of the children; the faces, and the labours, of the cows!

But far more, on behalf of India herself, do we need artists,

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\* A rough cross of charred wood used to be passed from clan to clan in the Scottish Highlands, as the call to war. We all know the folded chapati of the Indian villages.

half poets and half draughtsmen, who can wake in us the great new senses. We want men of the Indian blood who can portray for us the men of old,—Bhishma and Yudhishthira, Akbar and Sher Shah, Pratap Singh and Chand Bibi,—in such fashion as to stir the blood. We want through these to feel out, as a people, towards the new duties of the time to be. Not only to utter India to the world, but also to voice India to herself,—this is the mission of art, divine mother of the ideal, when it descends to clothe itself in forms of realism.

At each step, then, the conquest must be twofold. On this side something to be added to the world's knowledge, and on that an utterance to be given for the first time for India to herself. This is the battle that opens before the present generation. On our fighting a good fight, the very existence, it may be, of the next depends. Our national life is become perforce a national assault. As yet the very outworks of the besieged city are almost unstormed. Herewith then let us sound the charge. Sons of the Indian past, do ye fear to sleep at nightfall on your shields? On, on, in the name of a new spirituality, to command the treasures of the modern world! On, on, soldiers of the Indian Motherland, seize ye the battlements and penetrate to the citadel! Place garrison and watch within the hard-won towers, or fall, that others may climb on your dead bodies to the height ye strove to win!

### III

#### THE IDEAL

“Be what thou prayest to be made.”

THE adoption of the active or aggressive attitude of mind changes for us all our theories. We sight now nothing but the goal. Means have become ends, ends means. The power to count the cost and hesitate is gone for ever. We seek great objects and create them, scorning small hopes. The India about us has become Maha Bharata, Heroic India. The future offers wider chances of sacrifice than the past. We look to make our descendants greater than our ancestors.

Words have changed their meanings. Karma is no longer a destiny but an opportunity. Do I behold injustice? Mine the right to prohibit oppression, and I do it. Before the honest indignation of one fearless man, the whole of Maya trembles and departs. Destiny is passive before me. I triumph over it. Strength is the power to take our own life, at its most perfect, and break it if need be across the knee. This strength is now ours, and with it we conquer the earth. No one is so invincible as the man who has not dreamed of defeat, because he has a world beyond victory to achieve.

Our desires have grown immeasurable. But they are desires to give, not to receive. We would fain win, that we may abandon to those behind us, and pass on. For that which is dearer to us than self, we long greatly to throw away our life, and this defeated sacrifice transforms all our work with energy. The whole of life becomes the quest of death. Those that are close to us become associated with ourselves in our risks and defiances. We learn to realise that in this fact lies their beauty. Buddha did not sacrifice Yashodhara when he left her. He conferred on her the glory of renouncing with him.

Or is it Brahmacharya? This is not only for the monk. Nor

is it wholly of the body. "Abstinence," says one, "without a great purpose, is nothing. It is only the loss of another power." But even Brahmacharya has to be made aggressive. Celibacy, here, is only the passive side of a life that sees human beings actively as minds and souls. Marriage itself ought to be, in the first place, a friendship of the mind. Exchange of thought and communion of struggle is far beyond the offering of comfort, and the one need not exclude the other. The Brahmacharya of the hero makes marriage noble, for it seeks the good of another as an end in itself. In true Brahmacharya is involved the education of women, for a radiant purity comes to its perfect fruition in thought and knowledge and assimilation of experience, and there is a Brahmacharya of the wife as well as of the nun.

In the life of Tapasya is constant renewal of energy and light. Every task becomes easy to the worshipper of Sarasvati. He spurns ease. Daily and hourly does the impersonal triumph in him over the personal. His ideal aspires upward like a living flame. Each circle reveals fresh heights to be gained. The wife shares in the ideals of her husband. She protects them, as if they were her children even against himself. She urges him on towards them, when alone he might have flagged. She measures their common glory by the degree of this realisation. Her womanhood is grave and tender like some sacrament of the eternal. "Not this, not this," is the cry ever in the ears of both. Counting happiness for self a little thing, each gives it to the other in seeking to bestow it on the world around.

Sannyasin, again, is a word charged with new significance. It is not his Gerua cloth, but his selflessness, that makes a monk. There may be monks of science and learning, monks of art and industry, monks of the public life and service, and monks for the defence of the defenceless. Great is the impulse of renunciation: greater is the *sustained* self-sacrifice of a heroic life. In the soul of the Maha-purusha it is difficult, sometimes, to tell whether soldier or Sannyasin is predominant. He combines the daring of the one with the



freedom of the other. Years leave no mark on the aggressive life. It is as ready to cast itself down from the palm-tree's height, in old age, as it was in youth. Or more. For the spiritual will has grown stronger with time. Nothing is measured by personal hope or fear. All is tested by the supreme purpose, as making an end in itself. Self ceases to be a possible motive. The hand once put to the plough, it grows there, and the man would not know how to turn back. The Sannyasin cannot be touched by misery. For him defeat is merely a passing phase. Ultimate victory is inevitable. He is light-hearted in failure, as in success.

Obedience to the Guru becomes eager fulfilment of an idea, and a seeking out of new ways in which to bring about fulfilment. Every act of attainment is now understood to be a spiritual achievement, and there is no rest without the handing on of each realisation, as to disciples. At the same time, the standard of discipleship has grown inexorable. There is no passing of the spurious coin as genuine. The aspirant must serve, because without much service there is no germination of truth. He must worship, because without loyalty there is no manhood. But one stain of insincerity, one blemish of self-interest, and the Guru must recognise—though to do so be like going maimed for life,—that this is not that Chela for whom all Gurus seek.

Love and hatred are now immense powers. Love, when no longer personal, when all strength, becomes rousing, invigorating, life-giving. Hatred is the refusal to compromise. It cuts off meanness and falsehood root and branch. Love, now, finds unity of intention behind everything that is sincere. Pride is too proud to found itself on a lie. The man is silent until he has first acted. Nor dare he boast himself of the deeds of his ancestors or the achievements of his fellows. A fierce humility mingles with all his ambition and tells him that praise from unworthy lips is sacrilege.

And finally the life's purpose has become a consuming fire. The object is desired for its own sake. Like Shibi-Rana, whose whole soul was set on sacrifice, the left side weeps

that to the right alone it is given to suffer: Like Myer the German chemist, who had an eye and an arm torn off in the discovery of nitrogen compounds, the soul kneels in the midst of agony, to give thanks in an ecstasy that enough is still left to continue the search for knowledge. The vibration of the word Work when uttered by such workmen, carries the thrill of Jnana to other hearts.

Strong as the thunder-bolt, austere as Brahmacharya, great-hearted and selfless, such should be that Sannyasin who has taken the service of others as his Sannyasa, and not less than this should be the son of a militant Hinduism.

## IV

### ON THE WAY TO THE IDEAL

OF all forms of ignorance, few are at once so mean and so easy to fall into as that of self-idealism. How often, instead of aspiring upwards, we are merely worshipping our own past! Almost all good people are conscious of a great intensity of power and devotion in early youth. They are very apt to look back, for ever after, on the outside form which their life took at that period, and try all their lives to force that particular form on others. True freedom is a thing of which very few of us have ever caught a glimpse!

Self-idealism is a very special danger at the present time. This is a period of the recapture of ideals. We are always diving into the past in order to recover the thread of our own development. We exalt the name we bear. We praise our own ancestors. We seem to laud ourselves up to the skies. All this, however, is meant for encouragement, not for conceit. "Children of the Rishis!" exclaims a great orator to the crowd before him; but if some common man derives from this the idea that he is a Rishi, he shows his own Tamas, and nothing more. This was not the reaction intended by the orator.

Similarly, when we say that Christ represents in Europe the Asiatic man, we mean the *ideal* of Asia, not any chance individual on the pavement. We must be careful to think clearly in this matter. Many persons propose for three hundred millions of people that they should practise the methods of Jesus, of Chaitanya, of Tukaram, and nothing, they say, could resist them.

Nothing could resist them! Of course not, if each one of us *were* a Chaitanya, or a Jesus! "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth," said the prophet of the Christ. But is *our* silence so eloquent as this?

Only Tamas makes this mistake! The methods of Christ will not bring the victory of Christ *to the man who is not Christ!* In him the dumbness of the sheep is mere sheepishness, not Christ-likeness.

Again says the Tamasic: "Let me wait for the victory, then, till I *am* like Him!" Very good, if self-engrossment were the way to become so. But unfortunately for you, it is not! Only the man *who forgets himself*, for the victory, can ever reach Christhood. Buddha died for smaller ends five hundred times, before it was possible for Him to become the Buddha! Each time He forgot Himself, forgot life, forgot death, became merged in the struggle, without a thought beyond. In the end He had earned the empire of the world, and had to renounce the certainty of that, in order to mount the step beyond, that made Him the vessel of compassion to the soul.

Each man has his own stepping-stones across the river of Maya. From stone to stone, one step at a time, we go. Our whole soul must be in the next step. Not for most of us to reach the Absolute now: for most of us only the immediate end, whatever it be, and for that, to forget self! Only through action can we rise to that which is beyond action. The world is full of causes for which a man may give his all. Ladders of rope by which we may draw ourselves up to the Mukti at present out of sight. Many souls, many planes; not for all souls a single gospel. Only through all runs the great law: by renunciation alone, by forgetfulness of self, does man rise to the Supreme Goal.

If ye really forget self, any good-not-our-own will appeal to us. The good of others as an end in itself will become an appetite in us. We shall spend no time arguing as to theories and ideals, methods and plans. We shall *live* for the good of others; we shall merge ourselves in the struggle. The battle, the soldier, and the enemy will become one. Ours only the right to action, ours never the fruit of action!

But not as having already attained! Ages of strenuous activity are the opportunity of many to reach God-conscious-



ness. We pant for the ordeal, we thirst for active service—not that we are already fit, but that by facing the cannon's mouth we may become fit. "By pouring himself like an oblation on the fire of battle, by remaining unterrified in moments of great terror, has Duryodhana attained to this felicity!" How knightly is the commendation! How heroic the path! "Things are not bettered, but *we* are bettered, by making changes in them," said the Swami Vivekananda.

So the world is a school, a gymnasium for the soul. Humanity is not a great hall of mirrors, in which a single figure is reflected again and again, here well, and badly there. God yearns to achieve Himself supremely, and differently, in each one of us. All that we may take from the Pattern-Lives is the law that guided them, the aim for which they toiled. Renunciation! Renunciation! Renunciation! In the panoply of renunciation plunge thou into the ocean of the unknown. Accept the exigencies of thy time, the needs of thy place, as the material out of which the soul is to build its own boat for the great journey. Think not that it can copy exactly any that has gone before. To them, look only for the promise that where they have succeeded thou shalt not utterly fail. Then build, and launch. Set out to find—Thyself! And let thy going-forth be as a blaze of encouragement to those who have yet to depart!









“I love India as the birthplace of the highest and best of all religions, as the country that has the grandest mountains, the Himalayas. The country where the homes are simple, where domestic happiness is most to be found, and where the women unselfishly, unobtrusively, ungrudgingly serve the dear ones from early morn to dewy eve”.

— Sister Nivedita



Roy Villa, Darjeeling, India.  
Sister Nivedita breathed her last here.

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